THE IRON HORSE

EDWIN C. HILL

Mr. Lyle Ritz
Berlin Heights
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THE IRON HORSE

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A William Fox Production. *The Iron Horse.*

MADGE BELLAMY AS MIRIAM MARSH.

THE IRON HORSE

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EDWIN C. HILL

FROM WILLIAM FOX'S GREAT
PICTURE ROMANCE OF THE
EAST AND THE WEST
BY CHARLES KENYON AND
JOHN RUSSELL

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES
FROM THE PHOTOPLAY

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Dedication

TO MR. WILLIAM FOX, WHOSE MAGNIFICENT SCREEN ROMANCE OF LOVE, ADVENTURE AND THE GENIUS OF MAN TRIUMPHING OVER DEFIANT NATURE INSPIRED THIS NOVEL OF THE GREAT AMERICAN PICTURE.

E. C. H.

Acknowledgment is made to the men and to the institutions who contributed fact or suggestion toward the building of this romance: to the Government of the United States; to the War Department and the Bureau of Ethnology; to the Smithsonian Institute and the American Museum of Natural History; to the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library; to the inspired historians of the Transcontinental Railway, and, last, but by no means least, to the tellers of tales of the Old West.

FOREWORD

More than four years ago, while pursuing a study of the life of Abraham Lincoln, William Fox came upon a fact in Lincoln's career which opened the gateways of inspiration.

He found that it was Lincoln who, with far-seeing vision, brought about the accomplishment of the mighty plan to unite the East and the West of the United States by a transcontinental railroad which would run over plain and mountain from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean.

WILLIAM FOX

It was President Lincoln who made possible that road which broke the power of hostile Indians, conquered nature itself and opened up an incredibly rich empire to millions of future home-seekers—the central exploit of a thrilling and romantic phase of the Republic's history.

Mr. Fox became more and more impressed with the heroic nature of the exploit. He saw in it limitless material of rich romance. He sensed the vitality and color of this epic of courage and toil and suffering and final triumph over all.

Here was a great episode in the development of America which had been ignored by the makers of screen drama; an episode blazing with the American spirit. He determined to produce such a picture romance as would live in the recollection of the people. His aim was nothing less than to produce the great American picture play.

Mr. Fox moved deliberately and thoroughly. To direct the production he selected John Ford, a young man from Portland, Maine, who had already shown marked genius in the direction of motion picture plays and whose heart and soul were imbued with the spirit of America. Skilled minds were assigned to build the framework of a historical romance. Simultaneously, technical experts in railroad construction were retained.

Months were spent in research work in the Congressional Library at Washington, in the New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento and Omaha Public Libraries; in the Smithsonian Institute of Washington, in the American Museum of Natural History and among the faded archives of the Central and Union Pacific railroads.

With the romance developed, with an enor-

mous store of information, data and suggestions accumulated through research, with an accumulation of historic old railroad material, such as the original locomotives and equipment that were used in the actual building of the road, and with all concerned completely impregnated with the spirit of the project, the details of production were undertaken.

Mr. Fox personally selected the principals of the cast—young George O'Brien, with his unforgettable smile and manliness, who happens to be the son of the Chief of Police of San Francisco; Madge Bellamy, who possessed the sweetness and womanliness required by the character she was to personate; Fred Kohler as Deroux, the renegade and enemy of the road; J. Farrell MacDonald as Pat Casey, one of "the three musketeers," typical of the adventurous ex-soldiers of the Civil War who hastened in their old gray and blue uniforms to become the road builders; and the marvelous Lincoln, Charles Edward Bull, not an actor, but a judge of the courts in Reno, Nevada, willing to lend to a great production his singular resemblance to Mr. Lincoln.

Director Ford found that his stage was to be the far West itself—old Mexico, the mountains of California, the wide plains of Utah and Nevada, the prairie uplands of Dakota and the Continental Divide of Wyoming.

Production forged ahead winter and summer despite every whim and threat of nature, torrid heat and Arctic blizzards, obstacles and

disappointments almost equal to those which tried the hearts and spirits of the original railroad builders. Mr. Ford and his army of co-workers toiled forward, month after month, for nearly two years before the picture was made as Mr. Fox felt that it must be made. As the soldiers of the North and South worked shoulder to shoulder on the railroad, these sons of North, East, South and West toiled together for the picture. It was an international cast. Natives of thirty-seven countries are numbered in the organization, with Irish in the majority.

The army under General Ford moved up and down the land in a train of fifty-six cars and wherever it paused on location, a city sprang up—a city of tents and shacks, with hospitals, stables, a great community dining-room, machine shops, carpenter shops, an electrical laboratory—practically every mechanical attribute of a large, permanent community.

To old Mexico and the Yaqui River they moved to photograph the long-horned steers which form such an effective part of "The Iron Horse." To South Dakota they journeyed for the scenes of buffalo hunting. To the mountains of Northern California they traveled for the scenes of tunnel building and mountain life, and to the burning and arid plains of Nevada and Utah they turned for the many scenes of track laying and Indian fighting.

One of their largest camps was on the Piute Reservation, at Pyramid Lake, near Reno.

Here Mr. Ford commanded an army of about 4,000 people, including Indians, railroad workmen and cowboys. This tented city was more than a mile long and was sentineled like an army camp.

Thanks to the United States government, companies of infantry and troops of cavalry lent their assistance. And whenever the caravan moved, whole communities coöperated.

This task required two years, following a year of intensive planning and preparation. Then the production, in its first rough form of almost 30,000 feet, was ready for the eye of the man who had inspired it. For five months in California and other parts of the West, Mr. Fox had personally supervised the larger details of field work. Now he revised and edited, studying the continuity, often remaining in his offices until the early hours of the morning.

Week by week the work was improved and simplified. The romance was strengthened and the thread of history and nation building was preserved.

It is therefore with perfect confidence in this compelling romance of love, adventure and the American spirit, and in the sureness of its historical truth and accuracy, that Mr. Fox has now the pleasure and honor of presenting it first, to the people of his own country, and, subsequently, to the citizens of the world.

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THE IRON HORSE

CHAPTER I

BRANDON, THE DREAMER

"Reckon that ought to do for this time. Purty good's far as she goes. Anyway, Rome wasn't built in a day, as the poet says."

Big Dave Brandon threw aside the hammer with which he had given the final whack to the last nail he intended to drive that late winter afternoon. He shook his big head, tossing back a mane of long, black hair, coarse as an Indian's; threw out his arms and slowly raised them in a long, refreshing "stretch" which seemed to rid him of the cramps of unaccustomed indoor labor.

For a few moments he inspected the results of his toil, the all-but-completed shack he had been putting together since the previous autumn, working when opportunity offered or the mood impelled. It was to be an "addition" to the one-story cabin, his home, and little Davy's. His eyes, large, deep-brown, intelligent, humorous—yet the eyes of a dreamer—sparkled with amusement.

"Well, little house, you sure ain't no palace," he said aloud, talking to himself, a habit he had, in common with most dreamers, who find so little in common to discuss with the matter-of-fact people of this world. "Can't say you're goin' to add much beauty or majesty to the capital of the sovereign state of Illinois! Ah, well—"

Fumbling in a side pocket of his soil-stained, faded blue-jeans, tucked into much-worn high boots, he withdrew a twist of tobacco, shredded a portion into his short, black pipe, twiddled a red-hot coal from the open fire into the bowl and puffed thoughtfully as he strolled to the door and stood leaning against the jamb in the friendly radiance of the low, descending sun. The chorus of the town's life, little odds and ends of echoing activities of the day's decline, familiar, pleasant, came to his ear—the tinkle-tinkle-clang! of the blacksmith's hammer far down the long, straggling street; the rat-tat-tat from Barlow's cooperage; the whine and snarl from the sawmill near the river; the high-pitched, excited shouts of boys just released from school and hard at a game of "one-old-cat" before the inevitable summons to home and evening chores, and, presently, the sharp whistle of the locomotive of the evening train approaching Springfield from the east. It was this sound which shattered Brandon's reverie, straightened him from his lounging pose at the door jamb, drove the slackness from face and figure and brought to his eyes the reflection of some strange, burning exaltation of spirit. Like a drowsing war-

horse stirred suddenly by the blast of battle trumpets, David Brandon was awake, tense-strung as a bow.

Fire died in his pipe. He threw it aside, impatiently. Stepping over the doorsill, he strained his gaze eastward, searching for the thin, blue trail of wood smoke which would betray the progress through the low hills of the incoming train. As he gazed, transfixed, transfigured, a little group of neighbor women, Aunt Marthy Lowden and her sisters of the Dorcas Circle, homeward bound from "weekly meeting," passed the doorway, not three feet distant from him. Aunt Marthy, who adored little Davy, but who was accustomed to confiding to all and sundry that she "never could understand his pap," spoke cheerily:

"Howdy, Mr. Brandon. If you'll send Davy over this evenin', I'll have an apple-pie all ready fer him to tote home fer supper. Don't fergit, now."

She shook an admonitory finger in the face of the silent, absorbed figure. Brandon nodded, scarcely hearing what she said, his eyes finding and following the faint smoke plumes to the eastward. Miss Abby Peak, the gaunt spinster who "kept" the principal millinery shop, The New York Store, and who was fashion dictator of hat styles to the ladies of Springfield, nudged Aunt Marthy.

"Don't seem like he's a mite grateful, Marthy. There's plenty of folks 'at think that man's cracked in his upper story. Lord knows,

he's shiftless enough. Don't do nothin' steady like a man has to if he wants to git ahead."

" 'Tain't that he's ungrateful, Abby," explained Aunt Marthy, charitably. "Dave Brandon 'll do anything a person asks him, 'specially fer them 'at does him a good turn. Don't believe he's really shiftless, fer he works at his serveyin' trade, whenever he gits a job, though jobs seem to be kind of skeerce. Dave's as good-hearted as they come, and the men folks say he's straight as a spoke and allus pays his debts, soon as he gits the money. Trouble is, Dave Brandon's a crank and he's cranked on one subjick. Thinks there's goin' to be a railroad built clear across Ameriky some day. Says the time will come when folks 'll be able to travel all the way from New York to Californy in the steam cars and do it in a week. Tells everybody there's millions waitin' fer the men that 'll take hold of the projick and push it through. Land sakes! 'F that ain't bein' a crank, I don't know what is!"

"Jest as crazy as a loon," said Abigail Peak. " 'Tain't in Nature and I misdoubt it's in religion fer folks to travel that swift. 'Twould snatch a body's breath clean away! We ought to feel pretty sorry fer a boy whose father is tetched in the head as bad as that."

Glancing over their prim shoulders, the disturbed ladies continued along the plank sidewalk until they reached their corner, and disappeared into a side street. Brandon was barely aware of their greeting, oblivious

of their comments. He was use-hardened to that point of view from his neighbors. He knew what they thought, what they said. His mind and heart were bruised, painfully, but his enthusiasm glowed. They had beaten him down, but they could not conquer his spirit.

"Why can't they see it?" he asked himself. "It's got to come. It's as plain as the skies above."

The train whose progress Brandon had been following as it puffed its jerky way through the hills to the State Capital, reached the end of its journey from Meredosia on the Illinois River and saluted the good citizens of Springfield with a triumphant toot as it came to a stand at the rude frame station on the other side of the town. A fair quarter of the population of Springfield in that year of grace, 1853, might have been found in and about the "deepo," for the arrival of the daily train on the Northern Cross Railroad was the great event of every twenty-four hours, scarcely ever to be matched for drama with any other local happening.

Until recently Brandon himself had almost invariably been one of the interested, gossiping throng that greeted the fussy little train and stared with rounded eyes at the strangers from the East, homeseekers many of them, with occasional commercial travelers, "drummers," bringing the new-fangled manufactured wares of the Atlantic seaboard and the older, settled States of the South or the Ohio Valley. Of late

he had given up the habit of going to the station. His presence was sure to provoke the old argument. Talk always got around, somehow, to "Brandon's crazy idees" about running a railroad clear across the Indian country to join the Missouri River with the Pacific Ocean. He didn't mind arguing. Argument cleared the brain, helped a man to forge his ideas. It was the ridicule, the jeering, he flinched from; the "being made a fool of." The strain of Irish in him resented it. There had been a fight or two in which Brandon soundly thrashed two or three of the "smart Alecs," but fights didn't help.

"If I thought I could make 'em see what's comin' by fightin' 'em, I'd lick the whole town," he said. "But that's no way. A man's wastin' his time tryin' to hammer ideas into thick heads. Here's this little railroad right under their noses, their own railroad, that's making the town bigger and richer every year; a road runnin' and makin' money where folks said only a few years ago rails never could be laid down—and they can't see that these rails have got to go on and on, west and farther west, until they reach the Pacific! I can't stand much more of it. If I don't get out of this place I'll go crazy for sure."

Down the street a man appeared upon the veranda of a comfortable, neatly-painted two-story cottage, and glanced across the wide yard. He was short, as measured in a community of tall men; square-shouldered, stockily, solidly put together. One look at him was quite enough

to show that he was somebody—a person of importance, of substance. His clothes were "Eastern cut," garments beyond the genius of frontier tailors. A beaver hat, black, wide-brimmed, creased in the middle of the crown, topped his large, square, graying head. His coat was black, double-breasted, short-skirted, with wide lapels. Over a waistcoat of dark blue velvet swung a massive watch chain of gold nuggets. His trousers, enormously wide, were broad-striped in modest gray. This consequential citizen glimpsed Brandon standing at the door of the new shack, put his hands in his coat pockets and came down the steps of the veranda, approaching with a short, firm stride.

Brandon saw him and grinned.

"There's Tom Marsh all ready to give me Hail Columbia, Happy Land fer being a fog-brained fool," he thought. "Well, it seems to do Tom good and it don't really hurt me, so I s'pose I oughtn't kick. But of all the men in Springfield, Marsh ought to be the first to realize that I'm right. He's used to goin' East and meetin' big men. He knows there's already been talk of the road in New York and Washington. He's the biggest contractor in Illinois. And he still thinks it's a crazy dream."

Thomas Marsh, already one of Springfield's most important citizens, proud of his success as a self-made man, but, with all of his fair-mindedness and good nature, intolerant of ideas and men that offended his direct, practical habits of mind, crossed the lawn. The smile

with which he greeted his "shiftless" neighbor reflected something of liking, something of pity, a trace of disapproval.

"Howdy, Dave," he said. "Isn't it about time our little folks were home from school?"

"Why, yes, Tom," said Brandon, in his pleasant drawl, "I've been kind of waitin' for 'em here in the doorway—kind of waitin' to see their bright little faces flash around the corner there, by the old elm. Always does me good, 'specially when I'm low in mind. But they're all right. Don't worry a mite. Davy's as good as a grown man."

"No, I'm not worrying," said Marsh. "I'd trust Miriam almost anywhere with Davy. For a boy of ten he's got a lot of sense, Brandon."

He glanced keenly into the face of Davy's father. Brandon smiled.

"Guess you're wonderin' where he got all his sense, ain't you, Tom? Well, maybe he got it from his mother—most of it, anyway."

Marsh's expression softened. In his life and Brandon's was a coincidence of sadness which, more than anything else, reconciled the well-to-do contractor with the ways of the moneyless, unlucky civil engineer. His wife and Brandon's got through with life in the same year, dying within a few weeks of each other. The death of Mrs. Marsh had left to Marsh's care Miriam, a little girl of two, while Mrs. Brandon's death had left Davy motherless at the age of four. The circumstances made it natural for the children to become playmates, constant compan-

ions, unhappy without each other. Davy Brandon, although a normal young boy animal, fond of romping and rollicking with other boys, felt from the first that he was little Miriam's protector, her big brother. He felt vast pride in the trust reposed in him by Miriam's father. Davy was a good boy. Marsh knew there was good blood in the Brandons, the strain of an old and cultured family of Virginia, Cavalier stock. He frowned as he looked down the street toward the river, from which direction the children should soon appear. Why was it Brandon could not get on in the world? That boy ought to have a chance. His face hardened again. Brandon noted it, bracing himself against a new attack.

"Dave," said Marsh, "I've talked to you before and it's been just like arguing with the side of a house. I'll try once more. You're a square man. You're decent. You pay your debts. You're smart. Pretty much everybody likes you. But, Dave, nobody respects you. To put it straight, they think you're a damned fool. They believe you've let your mind go to seed over a foolish dream. Give up this dreaming over a transcontinental railroad. Wipe it out of your mind, clear out of your head. Quit wasting your time writing to big men back East, who only think you're mad and throw your letters in wastebaskets. There's nothing to it, Dave. You're still young. You're only thirty-five or so. Plenty of time to make money for your old age, enough to live well and to educate

the boy. Get back to surveying. If that don't go well, I'll help you. You know that I've got some pretty good connections. What about it?"

It was a full minute before Brandon spoke. He stood gazing off into space, that glow in his eye which provoked so many persons to call him "Crazy Brandon," "the Crank," "Dreamin' Dave." A smile played over his face. Marsh stared at him. This penniless engineer was often too much for him, like some one from another world, speaking another language, not the world Tom Marsh knew—not his language.

"Tom," said Brandon, finally, "you have tried to make me see your point of view. You have as good as told me a dozen times that I was headed down a road which led to the poorhouse or the asylum. I have tried two dozen times to make you see my point of view—that I may go to the poorhouse (it won't be the other, Tom), but before I go you and others will admit that I was right. Why in God's name men like you, well-read, educated, can't see that this Pacific Railroad is sure as death and taxes, amazes me. It makes me kind of desperate, Tom. Here's destiny trying to shake hands with you, just pleading to make you rich, the thing which will make the old United States a real nation, Tom, and not one of you can see it! Are you all blind and deaf, you business men and politicians?

"I know what you're thinking," Brandon went on, his voice rising, dark eyes flashing, big

fists cutting the air with powerful gestures, "you're thinking what a fool idea it is that a railroad can be laid down over 2,000 miles of desert and wilderness, crawling with hostile Indians and with no white population, no settlements, no farms, no towns, no hope of business, all the way from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. That's in your head. I know it! But you're wrong! Can't you see that America will have to find homes for a hundred million people, maybe two hundred million, before another century passes, and that land must be found for them? Can't you see that it's always been Westward, Ho! for the white man since the earliest days? It's the Iron Horse he's ridin' now, and the Indians will be powerless to stop it. Nature, herself, can't halt the American spirit!

"I tell you, Marsh, the Pacific Railroad is coming. We'll see it in ten years. Let people laugh and call me a crazy fool and dreamer. I know, Marsh, I know! I feel it!"

"Brandon," said Marsh, and his words fell like stones, "you talk like a Fourth of July spellbinder. Dream away your own life, if you will. It's yours. But you owe something better to that boy. Give him a chance. You say you 'know,' you 'feel.' What do you visionaries know about the practical side of such a scheme? Have any of you ever figured what it would cost to build a railroad from the Missouri to California? Do you gentlemen who live up in the clouds ever allow yourselves to consider

such material matters as hard cash, or where the money is going to come from? Well, I'll tell you. It would cost at least $100,000 a mile—probably more than $200,000,000 in all—if it could be done, which it couldn't! 'What you know,' indeed!"

"I suppose there's no use saying anything more," Brandon replied, slowly. "Still, I don't mind telling you that if surveys along the old Indian and Overland Trails to Oregon and California could show easy passes through the mountains, why there are men standing ready in the East to push the road through Congress. Big men, Tom. Millionaires. Smart as you are!"

CHAPTER II

DAVY AND MIRIAM

While Thomas Marsh was laboring at the hopeless task of converting Big Dave Brandon to the ways of the practical and steady-going, their children, the one link of sympathy and understanding between these opposite souls, were "laying out the railroad to California."

Over the snow-covered meadow leading to Berry's Pond (a wonderful place for bull-heads in the spring), Davy and Miriam were plotting the road of dreams, playing the game with the solemnity of all small people who make toys of grown-up ideas.

Passionately devoted to his father, almost his father's only sympathetic listener in all Springfield, Davy had gleaned a remarkably clear understanding of the great project that dominated Brandon's thoughts. Boy-like, with a strong inclination for dramatic expression, he translated into the mimicry of play the visions and prophecies which his father poured into his ears.

"Playing railroad" was the most absorbing game that Davy Brandon knew. Into the game he put not only his father's ideas, but those romantic and idealistic impressions which a

boy of ten gathers from mixed reading. Davy's railroad building with Miriam had touches of the Old Testament and the army of Moses toiling toward the Promised Land, of Richard, Lion-Heart and the Crusades, and of Daniel Boone blazing his way through the forests and over the mountains of young America.

Naturally, Davy was the hero of these epic achievements, with Miriam playing an enthusiastic, but secondary rôle. Feminism and the invasion of the gentler sex into the sports and workaday activities of little men and big, had felt no urge and made no progress. In the Illinois of the fifties, "woman's place was still in the home," and they were content to follow a step or two behind their lords, the masters of creation.

Davy had made a rude imitation of his father's battered theodolite and tripod, and with Miriam to carry line and drive stakes, he put the Pacific Railroad through all barriers of man and nature to its glorious end in the land of sunshine and gold.

Miriam, gifted associate in this mighty engineering achievement which never got beyond Berry's Pond, played a willing enough part because she would have entered into any game that Davy fancied. Her little legs plodded back and forth in the wake of the great engineer, as she obeyed his stern commands. If the game pleased Davy, it was fun enough for her, although she could never take it quite so seriously. Various remarks made by her father on the gen-

eral subject of "Brandon and his crazy notions" lingered in her mind.

"We're surveyin' through Nebrasky Territory, now, Miriam," said Davy, his eyes shining with something of the strange glow which burned in the eyes of his father.

"Dad says it's got to go that way, Miriam, and Dad knows all about it. He's the smartest man in Springfield, my Dad is."

" 'Nen where do we take the road?" asked Miriam, reasonably.

Davy paused, brow knitted. This was a puzzler. Was it Wyoming that his father had said?

"We'll survey her through the Indian country," said Chief Engineer Brandon, of the Great Pacific Railroad.

"Watch out now, while I run the line. Won't do to make any mistakes. Affects the figgers."

The pathfinders, altogether absorbed in play, were quite unaware of the quiet amusement they were furnishing to a citizen of Springfield who had ridden his horse into town along the Macon County Road, and had observed the children as they stood in earnest conference. This man descended from his tall and rather bony nag, hitched it to a sapling and slowly approached over the snow toward the boundary line of "Nebrasky." Coming to a rail fence which zigzagged its irregular course a few rods from the children, he leaned over it and watched them for a while, silently, fun gleaming in his large eyes, and plucking at the corners of his wide mouth.

In all Springfield there was no one who so filled the eye. He was very tall, to begin with, this man, a shade more than six feet and three inches; but his spareness of build and length of arm and leg suggested even greater height. He was in the middle years, forty-four actually, yet seemed older because of a kind of melancholy which clung about him. His face, long and surmounted with a splendid high, broad forehead, easily discernible under the round fur cap he was wearing, was the face of a man whom faith and a high heart had brought through deep trouble. Hardship, a life of toil, the habit of thought, had graven their lines upon it—a sad face, gentle as a mother's in spite of its ruggedness; with heavy brows over dark, curiously deep-set eyes; a large, generous nose; a wide mouth which remained persistently humorous, and clean-cut jaws culminating in the chin of a man of action.

Over his big, slightly stooping shoulders, now slouched upon the top rail, was draped a woolen shawl of red and brown "checks," which had given him comfort on his long, cold ride from court in the adjoining county. Underneath the shawl was visible a coat of dark blue, with brass buttons, such an upper garment as the country lawyers of that day were fond of wearing, the uniform of their trade. Long coat-tails flapped almost to the tops of leather boots which had seen many months of service. The great brown hands were encased in heavy mittens of wool, clumsy, but warm and serviceable.

It was Assistant Surveyor Marsh, whose bright eyes saw him first. This pleasing discovery not only suspended the progress of the great railroad for that day, but brought sudden disaster to Chief Surveyor Brandon's invaluable aide. In delighted recognition of the tall man, Miriam sprang backward with a cry of welcome, attempted a curtsey, lost her balance and went tumbling into a snowdrift which betrayed her into the chilly water of the pond's edge. Her gasp of fright brought to the rescue of beauty in distress, not only Davy, but the silent onlooker. He came forward with long strides, great arms swinging, just as Davy fished a bedraggled Miriam from the water. Complete was the wreck of Miss Marsh's costume. Wide hat, gingham dress (so beautifully starched and prim only a little while ago), pantalettes with lace edges, all dripped mournfully.

As Miriam wiped away the tears which streaked the charming face, as pink as a peony, the tall man all sympathy and gentleness, gathered her to him with a comforting arm, and applied a vast, red bandanna handkerchief to the watery ruin.

"Now, now, you mustn't cry, Miriam," he said in his slow, deep voice. "Everything's all right. You surveyors must expect to meet with little accidents now and then. I'll tell Daddy it was my fault."

"I wasn't s-s-scared!" sobbed Miriam. "It just made me mad, Mr. Lincoln, to be so awk-

ward. What will you and Davy think of me for being so *awfully* awkward? A *boy* wouldn't have tumbled down like a rag doll!"

"I've seen many a boy take tumbles," said the tall man. "That's nothing to worry about. Howdy, Davy. How's the great railroad coming along?"

"Fine, Mr. Lincoln." Davy's enthusiasm exploded. "I got it all figgered out, clear to the Rocky Mountains."

"Well, that's more than a lot of other folks have got figured out," smiled the gentle giant. "But we must be getting this young lady home in two shakes of a lamb's tail. Wet clothes and a January afternoon aren't a good combination for young ladies who are trying to grow up, are they, Davy?"

He hoisted Miriam to his great shoulders, carried her to where his horse was tied, set her down a moment until he climbed into the saddle, then lifted her from the ground, placing her in front of him. With his right arm he swung Davy up to a seat behind the saddle. He clucked to old Cæsar, patient and understanding companion of many a lonely ride on court circuit, persuading that amiable steed into an acceleration of movement which friends of Abraham Lincoln and the horse were wont to describe as a jog trot. They had only a little way to go, less than half a mile, which was as well, for Miriam was rapidly growing chilled. As they turned the corner of the street by the old elm, Marsh and Big Dave, now at the end of a futile

argument, caught sight of them. Marsh clutched Brandon's arm.

"There's something wrong, Dave. Miriam's bundled up in a shawl. Abe Lincoln's carrying her."

Brandon smiled reassuringly.

"I don't know just what's happened to our Miriam, Tom," he said calmly, "but I do know Abe Lincoln. If anything serious had occurred, you'd see those long legs of Abe's reaching out toward us in six-foot hops. He wouldn't wait for old Cæsar. Looks to me as if she had tumbled into the water somewhere. Besides, there's Davy laughing at one of Abe's yarns."

From old Cæsar's quarter deck, Mr. Lincoln lifted a quieting hand.

"Nothing to bother about, boys. Our young lady forgot all about Berry's Pond being right behind her when she tried to make a special curtsey in my honor."

He gently lowered Miriam into her father's arms.

"Into the house with you, Miss, for warm clothes and a hot drink," he said with mock sternness. "Then I may tell you the rest of the story about the little red squirrel."

Miriam scudded across the lawn and into her own home, while Davy, at a nod from his father, and a pat on the shoulder from Lincoln's big hand, ran into the Brandon cabin to build up the fire for supper. The three men were silent for a few moments, Abraham Lincoln sensing that some dispute had arisen between his two

friends. With the patience and sure tact that marked him to the end of his days, he waited for one of them to speak. It was Marsh who broke the silence.

"Abe," he said, "I wish to Heaven you could say something to Dave that would serve to sweep the cobwebs out of his brain. Here's a good man wasting his life over a wild dream. A railroad, clear across the country! He's losing his common sense.

"Dave and I came out to this country together, as you know. We started even. I've made money. I'll make more. I *stick* to something. I don't go frittering away time and energy chasing will-o'-the-wisps. Look at Dave! He can't stick to anything! All he can talk about is railroad! Railroad! Railroad! I'm sick of the word!"

Brandon stood leaning against a tree throughout this tirade, his eyes fixed on something invisible in the far distance of the West. Lincoln remained silent, watching Brandon. Suddenly, Big Dave spoke, his eyes alight, his powerful arm sweeping the western horizon.

"Look out there," he said. "What is it? Waste. Wilderness—desert—mountains—Indians—buffalo—God knows what! But some day, in our own life-time, the railroad will be built that will reclaim that wilderness—the road that will make the United States a real nation. If God spares me, I'm going to have a hand in building it, and I want my boy to have a hand in it."

He returned a steady gaze to the West that was drawing his dreamer's soul. Marsh spoke irritably:

"In all your life, Abe, did you ever hear such a fol-de-rol of nonsense?"

"Why, yes, Tom," said Mr. Lincoln in his leisurely, deep drawl. "Yes, I've heard men talk that very fol-de-rol—good men, Tom. I mind hearing a young man named Dodge, talking just that way, when I was out in Council Bluffs a short time ago. I was sitting on the porch of the old Pacific House listening to the bullfrogs and looking at the stars, when a young army engineer sat down beside me and got to talking about surveys he had made for the army on this very railroad notion.

"Well, sir, this young Dodge was just crammed full of the railroad project. He'd been all through Nebraska territory, clear to the Rockies, and he was just popping with enthusiasm. Tom, he made it look pretty reasonable. He just about converted me."

Brandon swung around from his pose by the tree.

"Do you believe it can be done, Abe? Do you really believe it?"

"Bosh!" said Marsh. "All a damned rainbow! Fellows who don't want to work, looking for the pot of gold!"

Mr. Lincoln put a great, brown hand upon Marsh's plump shoulder.

"Old friend," he said, "some day men like you will be laying rails along that rainbow."

Gratitude welled up in Brandon's heart. Emotion often swayed him. He gripped Lincoln's hand.

"You've settled it for me," he said. "I'd rather take your judgment, Abe, than the opinion of all the rest of Illinois."

"Seems to me," said Mr. Lincoln, thoughtfully, "I'd head for the Black Hills, Dave, if I was really set on going West. This young Dodge told me that right there was the heart of the problem, finding an easy pass and a short cut through those hills. Dodge seemed to think that's where the pot of gold was hid, Tom," he said, his eyes twinkling toward Marsh.

"Two weeks 'll see me on the road," said Brandon, as he turned away toward his cabin. "I'll take my chance in the Black Hills, Abe. I'll follow the rainbow!"

CHAPTER III

A RAINBOW GLOWS IN THE WEST

It was a wintry, sunlit morning in late February when Big Dave and Little Davy turned their backs upon Springfield to seek the gateway of the West. Their going made no stir, provoked scarcely a ripple. They had few friends to wish them well, few indeed, whose hearts would follow them out upon the long trail.

In the month that had drifted by after the talk with Lincoln and Marsh, the talk that fired him to decision, Brandon had sold or traded his few possessions, the cabin which had been home for him and Davy, its poor furnishings, and the "patch" of a dozen acres which went with it. Marsh saw to it that Brandon was not cheated—the surveyor had the worst possible head for business—but the proceeds were hardly enough to capitalize even a dreamer.

After all their necessaries had been bought, riding horses, a pack-mare, a Sharpe's rifle, throwing a bullet heavy enough to down an elephant in its tracks; an ample supply of powder and ball ammunition, an ax and a few other tools, and their stores of food and extra clothing, Big Dave was not conscious of the weight of gold he tucked in his money belt.

"Won't have much use for hard cash, any-

way," he told Higgins, the general storekeeper.

"Guess you think you're hittin' the Hallelujy Trail," grunted Higgins, a sharp-nosed "down-Easter" who took small pains to conceal his contempt for Brandon. "Pussonly, I never heerd tell of any country where a man didn't have good use for money."

The loungers who made Higgins's store their club for the resolvent of all questions, social, political and religious, cackled their appreciation.

"Better keep tight hold onter yer head," advised Higgins's sallow-faced clerk, a youth hard-bitten by fever, ague and a mean disposition.

"Why so, Hank?" inquired Brandon, incautiously.

"Bekase the Injuns 'll sure jerk yer skelp loose," said Hank with a stuttering titter.

"Well," replied Big Dave, good-humoredly, but pointedly, "if they do, Hank, they'll let daylight in on something your head never held."

"You think you're durned smart, don't ye?" snarled the discomfited clerk, as the loungers haw-hawed.

As Brandon and his son rode away from the store, their final purchases securely packed on the mare, the idlers did not trouble to wave good-by. Big Dave felt a contraction of the heart. After all, these people had been neighbors. They might have given him a heartier, more human farewell.

"It shows what they think of me," he re-

flected, with bitterness unusual to him. "Time I was getting out, sure enough!"

"At the western edge of the town, where the main street ended and the road to St. Louis began, a little group awaited their coming—and going—Mr. Lincoln, Thomas Marsh and Miriam. The lawyer showed a cheerful, encouraging face to the Brandons, as one who felt the need of lifting their spirits and supporting their hopes. Marsh was solemn-faced, still irritable over Big Dave's obstinacy, but realizing, in his good heart, the friendlessness of these homeless pilgrims. Miriam's blue eyes were drowned in grief, and though she bit hard upon her lips and thrust forward her rounded chin, the tears kept welling down in glistening rivulets of sorrow.

"This is good of you," said Brandon, as he got off his horse and shook hands with Mr. Lincoln and Marsh. "I won't forget it—" He stopped, wordless. Marsh thumped him on the back.

"That's all right, Dave. I think you're doing a fool thing, but you've made your own bed, and I'm not the man to hope you'll find it hard to lie on. The Lord bless you and keep you safe, you and Davy. Now, if there's anything you'll let me do for you—a little loan, maybe?"

"No, we've got enough to go on with," said Brandon, quietly. "But I thank you, Tom, for the offer. I reckon we'd better just say good-by and hit the road. Good-by, Abe. I'm not forgetting what you told me about the Black Hills."

"Just a minute, Dave, just a minute," said Lincoln. He turned away a few yards to where Davy and Miriam were standing in inarticulate farewell. They were very close together, but they had found nothing to say. The grief which paralyzed their young hearts, kept them silent. Mr. Lincoln put his great arms around them both and gathered them to him in a "bear hug."

"Don't feel so bad," he comforted, "it won't be long, maybe. Now, I have brought along something for each of you, something to remember me by, a keepsake. If they make good their threat of sending me to Congress, and you ever come to Washington, you can always show these to the doorkeepers and they'll let you walk right in."

He produced two medals, cast in bronze, exactly alike, each bearing the haughty head of an Indian Chief, a date and some lettering in long words.

"Medals of the Black Hawk War," he explained. "You know—" he smiled drily—"they made a captain of me in that little rumpus. I wasn't much of a captain, but then it wasn't much of a war. I collected a few of these souvenirs after it was all over. Perhaps they'll make you think of Abr'am Lincoln and each other quite a lot. Keep them with you for luck pieces."

Miriam gripped his arm and sobbed, her little woman's heart wrung unbearably; while Davy, for all his effort at manly fortitude, showed wet

eyes and a quivering chin, and gave his "thank you" in a shaking voice.

"Aren't you ev-er coming back, Davy?" said Miriam, between sobs. "Please, please come back soon! I can't bear it without you. Nothing will be the same."

She threw her arms about his neck, and Davy, always the protector, held her close to his heart, murmuring a boy's words of comfort. Mr. Lincoln slowly drew them toward Brandon and Marsh and lifted Davy to the saddle. Big Dave mounted. There were no more words. A wave of the hand, a despairing sob from Miriam and they were gone toward the sunset.

They made slow progress. There was no need for haste. Brandon planned to go on to St. Louis, taking his time, collecting there whatever information might be of value and then, if possible, to find some means of making his way up the great water road, the Missouri River, with other West-farers. For days they rode, gradually throwing off the depression of uprooted home ties, their spirits uplifted as they felt the call of the new—of adventure. They spent a week along the road to the Mississippi, and were ferried across its broad, yellow flood to the levee where up-river and down-river steamboats lay in orderly array, the sun glistening on their ornamental brasswork, their white paint and on their great paddle wheels which could conquer the swiftest of currents. Steamboats before the coming of the railroad were the luxurious couriers of a rich and splendid business.

The fine, fast boats that met the eyes of the Brandons formed an absorbing spectacle for boy and man. It was the middle of the day and the levee, the long, sloping embankment which descended from the water front of the city to the wharves, was thronged with heavy wagons and one-horse drays bearing freight to and from big and little boats that had plowed triumphantly all the way from gay New Orleans in the far South to St. Paul in the far North, carrying the cotton, tobacco and molasses of the land of sunshine in exchange for the fabrics, furs, grain and machinery of the land of snow.

"Oh, Daddy!" Davy cried, as his enchanted gaze identified a particularly graceful and famous river flyer of the times. "There's the *General Pike,* Daddy, that we've read about. You remember when her engineer told the cap'n he'd 'bust the record or bust her bilers!' "

"I remember," said Brandon, hardly less interested than his boy. "They're wonderful, these boats. They say that inside they're all silks and velvets and fine paintings. Maybe we'll have a chance to see 'em, son. But we must push on to find a place to stay."

From the ferry landing that Jim Bridger had established nearly forty years previously, they slowly made their way through a bustling throng. Hundreds of river travelers were hurrying up or down the levee, embarking upon or debarking from a dozen steamboats: Rich planters from the South, wearing black, broad-brimmed hats, broadcloth coats and breeches

and high boots of fine leather, gallant, masterful-looking men, with faces browned by a hotter sun than Missouri knew, and speaking with a soft liquid-drawl; fur trappers from the northwest, rangy, bearded giants, garbed in buckskin shirts or heavy woolen jackets, wearing round caps of beaver or marten, booted too, and striding along with a free swing that took Davy's eye as their strange oaths took his ear; bosses from the great trains of Santa Fé wagons awaiting their burdens for Southwest and West, hairy, heavy-shouldered fellows, red-faced and noisy from the potent whiskey of the levee bar-rooms; Easterners in what Davy thought was very fancy garb, indeed; here and there an Indian in fringed buckskins and moccasins (government scouts, Big Dave guessed); army officers in dark-blue, very alert and straight-backed, on their way to or from the far-scattered posts of the Indian country; lordly steamboat captains, treading the levee like the monarchs they were; steamboat mates, hard men, who carried blacksnake whips or loaded billies as the symbols of their man-driving trade; here and there a fine lady, mincing along under a ridiculous parasol, not much bigger than a pancake; wearing a tiny hat, trimmed with close-curled feathers, a tight "basque" and very wide, voluminous skirts, falling to low-heeled shoes of dainty kid—very wonderful ladies, they seemed to Davy; professional river gamblers, high-hatted and dressed with the rigid severity of a minister of the gospel; hundreds

of negro slaves, staggering under burdens, tugging at great wagons mired in the mud, or passing in squads under the rough command of cargo mates, black faces glistening with sweat, the whites of their rolling eyes showing, and, under their toil, laughing and singing with the inextinguishable merriment of a child-like race—these and others passed before the gaze of father and son, magnetized by the fascinating St. Louis of the fifties.

It was late afternoon before they found a tavern which suited Brandon's purse, one that promised simple, homely fare and decent shelter for them and a stable for their beasts. It carried a high-sounding name on its dingy signboard, The Independence Hotel, and it was crowded with men whose feet were trail-bent—toward Texas or Santa Fé, toward Kansas, toward the Oregon or the Salt Lake Trail and the upper Missouri—men whose restless spirits and fortune's call were leading into the magical West.

As the days slipped by, wonderful, exciting days for Davy, Brandon made the acquaintance of many of these wayfarers, a rough, good-natured crew, but a hard-swearing, hard-drinking lot, neither understanding nor expecting to be understood, unless talk bristled with profanity. At night they jammed the bar, deep, boisterous laughter roaring to the ceiling as they shouted their jokes, told wild tales and "set up" drinks, round after round of raw liquor. Their talk was of the upper Missouri, the new settle-

ments in Kansas where farms were being taken up and where towns were springing from the prairie; of the declining fur trade, of the Indian troubles, of the strange new folk that were making an empire upon the edge of the great Salt Lake; gossip of a score of trails. Brandon listened keenly, hoping to pick up news of value.

His patience was rewarded. One night, after a day of sight-seeing that had sent Davy early to the Land of Nod, he joined a group in the bar and found them idly discussing an expedition which was being organized for the new territory of Washington. It came out that Governor Stevens, who had just been appointed as the first ruler of the territory, was expected to lead up the Missouri and over the Oregon Trail a big outfit of surveyors, scouts, and soldiers, with horses and mules. Brandon heard that agents of the governor were dickering with the American Fur Company to transport men and equipment up the Missouri to St. Paul. He inquired of a raw-boned Missourian, who had nodded to him once or twice, if it would be possible for him to find a job with the Governor Stevens outfit. The Missourian looked Big Dave over from head to foot, appraisingly, downed half a tin-cupful of whiskey and spoke his mind.

"By th' heft of ye, stranger, I reckon y' ain't afeerd uv work, but by the eternal! you'll need every —— ounce uv yer grit 'f ye trail with that outfit! I kinda cotton to ye. What's yer name?

Brandon, eh? Well, Brandon, I happen to be part of that —— outfit myself. Haddon's my name and Bill's the handle my old man sawdered onter it. Now, here's the layout. Stevens is takin' with him nigh onter two hundred uv the —— d—est, meanest mules that ever kicked a man loose from his appetite. They're reg'lar wild cats, these —— Irish canaries. Handlin' them is jest like handlin' eels thet hev swallered dynamite. The outfit needs good men and if yer sot on takin' a chance, why, by ——, Bill Haddon 'll put in a word fer ye where it'll ring the bell."

Mr. Haddon, a competent mule-skinner, proved to be a man of his word, whose recommendation carried weight. Three days later Brandon was regularly enlisted as a member of the party. But there was weary waiting before Governor Stevens arrived and the expedition got under way. Big Dave's patience was sorely tried before the light-draught steamboat backed away from the levee and breasted the tide of the Mississippi, pushing ahead of it the flatboats which carried live-stock and piled-up stores.

CHAPTER IV

THE RIVER ROAD

River travel, a few days up the Mississippi, then into the turbulent Missouri, was a vivid delight to little Davy. The "little feller," as Stevens's men called him—he was the only child in the party of two hundred—was petted and pampered by every one from the governor down to the mule-skinners and the half-breed interpreters. He had the run of the boat, from the captain's cabin to the lower deck where the roustabouts worked, gambled and slept. To Davy they were all good friends. From them he learned something of the great, new country beyond the bend of the river. His manliness and bright, cheerful spirit had no little influence upon the men. With Davy around, they worked more willingly and softened their oaths, although Brandon occasionally winced at some of the language which fell upon the ears of his small son.

Steamboating up the Missouri River in the Spring of the year was a toilsome and dangerous business. Bankful in early Spring flood, the great river drove southward with savage force, fighting the puny boat every fathom of the way, and launching an endless succession of snags, inanimate monsters of destruction. Any

one of these half-submerged trees, wrenched from forests a thousand miles distant, would have ripped the bottom out of the craft if her crew had not been incessantly vigilant. With spars and long pike-poles they fended off the lunging snags, working at night in the light of whale-oil flares, mysterious shadows struggling with invisible monsters. More than once Davy heard the cry, "Man overboard!" and was carried to the rail in a surge of men to see the bobbing head and waving arms being swiftly dragged down-river by the racing current.

At night he liked to sit just forward of the "texas" where the boat's officers slept, and to gaze upward at the tall smoke-stacks pouring flame into a starless night. To the boy's ears would come the hoarse, but melodious chant of the quartermaster and leadsmen calling the channel depth to the pilot, a kind of sorrowful strain which took his thoughts back to Springfield and Miriam. But not for long. It was all too thrilling, this wonderful river-road journey, for the melancholy of homesickness to find an abiding place in the swift thoughts of the boy. Davy was living for himself a book of travel, more fascinating than any he had ever read.

The *Oregon* "laid up" at the old trading post of Bellevue, one pitch-black night, and Davy accompanied his father and half the boat's company to the tavern. It was kept by Colonel Sarpy, an early-comer in the country, and now the trader at Bellevue for the American Fur Company. He was under-sized, dark of com-

plexion, quick in his movements, polished in his manners.

"Fire-eater," said Bill Haddon in Brandon's ear. "Little as he is, the Omahas call him 'Big Chief,'—'Ne-Ka-Yah-He,' in their lingo. Stands on his dignity. There's a fool who'll get a lesson!"

A big mule-whacker, thirsty for liquor, had shoved through the crowded bar, unceremoniously elbowing Sarpy out of his way. The little Colonel followed the teamster to the bar and faced him, eyes blazing. The teamster looked down at the bantam, grinned and spat in contempt. Sarpy spoke, every word cracking like a whip:

"Do you know who I am, sir? I am Peter A. Sarpy, sir! The old horse on the sand bar, sir! If you want to fight, I am your man, sir! I can whip the devil, sir! Choose your weapons, sir! Bowie knife, shotgun or revolver, I am your man, sir!"

With a lightning movement he whipped out his long-barreled Colt's forty-five, and snuffed a candle down the bar, ten paces distant. The mule-whacker's jaw dropped and fear crept into his eyes. Without another word, he edged away from the little man of wrath and slipped around the wall to the door, through which he vanished into the night. A roar of laughter went up. Colonel Sarpy calmly replaced his pistol and resumed walking up and down, with an occasional word to an acquaintance.

Almost every day the boat made long stops at

a woodyard where corded fuel was waiting, ready stacked; or paused at one of the courageous settlements which struggled for a foothold between river and forest. Davy had unforgettable glimpses of the doughty pioneers who were steadily crowding the frontier toward the Pacific, and frequently, along the uplands, he saw bands of Omahas following great herds of buffalo or slowly riding their ponies, grim silhouettes upon the horizon. Captain Terry told him tales of the old steamboating days when Indians were a deadly menace. There had been steamboats on the Missouri since as far back as 1819, the Captain said, and for many years afterward the Indians fought desperately to close the river-road against the dreaded invasion of white men.

"You see, Davy," said Captain Terry, "they were smart enough to understand that their hunting grounds were in danger, and they did their best to drive the boats off the river. They seldom attacked in the daytime, but raids at night were common, especially when the craft of those days had to tie up along the banks for fear of snags, or because the old-time pilots didn't know enough about the channel changes in this crazy river to navigate in the dark. The Indians would ride along the bank, whooping like fiends and shooting clouds of arrows, fire arrows, usually. Their game was to burn the boats. They killed a lot of good men that way and burned more than one boat.

"Then a fellow came along with an idea that

scared 'em off. He knew that Indians are a superstitious lot, believing in all sorts of devils, so he rigged up a special devil for 'em. He made a big serpent's head, like a giant kite, out of lath and oil paper, and lit up the contraption with whale-oil lamps. He set this snake-devil up in the lookout, and a man was posted up there to turn the wicks of the lamps up and down, so as to make the scary head sort of glare and disappear, and glare and disappear. It worked fine. It was too much for the reds. It never failed to send them to the right-about with whoops of fear. The result was that the Indians let up a whole lot on the night attack business and steamboating got to be a good bit safer."

Some days, the whistle of the *Oregon,* the American Fur Company boat upon which the Stevens expedition was traveling, would blast a salute to a company craft swiftly heading down-river with a cargo of furs from far posts in the Missouri headwaters, and Davy would hear cheery shouts echoing from boat to boat as company men gave the good hail. He would catch glimpses of the gay scarlets and saffrons of the shirts and head handkerchiefs of the incoming trappers, eager for the joys of St. Louis after months of toil and danger along the forested stream of the northwest.

Almost every day they passed keelboats, heavily loaded, rude, strongly built crafts, sixty to seventy feet long, tugged up-stream by a cordelle, a heavy rope three hundred feet or

more in length, one end of which was attached to a mast, and the other hauled by two-score stalwart men marching along shore. When the wind was right, the labor of dragging these heavy boats up-stream was eased by sails. Often Davy saw them using poles and long oars in their laborious struggle against the raging river.

An occasional mackinaw, with four oarsmen, shot down-stream, piled high with pelts, and now and then lusty, brown-armed French-Canadian half-breeds flashed past the laboring steamboat with shrill cries. Davy had his first sight of the bull boats, the queer craft built from a frame of willow saplings covered with the hides of bull buffalos.

These sights and sounds and the thrill of deer feeding in the bottomlands in the early morning never grew stale. One day Bill Haddon pointed out a great, lumbering, brown shape on the edge of the wooded Nebraska shore.

"Bar," said Haddon, laconically, and Davy's heart skipped a beat.

"No use shootin'," added the mule-driver. "Too fer off, and the boat wouldn't stop, nohow."

Brandon had formed his plans during the weeks of the slow up-river progress of the old *Oregon*. He had earned his pay of a dollar a day and keep for himself and his boy, but he had had no easy task among the "Irish canaries," the half-wild Missouri mules that had been so luridly described by Haddon. These vicious,

kicking brutes had broken the legs of two men, and had bitten several others. Always restive, and sometimes driven frantic by the fierce storms of thunder and lightning, they had to be watched day and night. But Big Dave had escaped with nothing worse than a bruise or two and had won the profane praise of the boss when the plunging, squealing herd was driven to panic. To the boss, Jelks, he confided his intention to leave the expedition at Council Bluffs and strike westward over the Oregon Trail to the Pacific.

"Hate ter lose a good man, but I won't stand in yer way, Brandon," said Jelks. "Reckon you've done yer share. But it's risky business fer a lone man and a boy to hit that trail. Injuns are gettin' more 'n more restless. There's one of Jim Bridger's men, tall feller, named Spence, aboard here, and he'll know purty much what the lay of the land is."

Brandon had heard a hundred tales of Bridger, the greatest scout and plainsman that the West ever knew. He was eager to meet any one known as "Jim Bridger's man." Of all the intrepid pathfinders Bridger loomed the greatest, his deeds and his fame overtopping the exploits of even such paladins as Kit Carson, Jim Baker, California Joe, Jim Beckwith, Pop Corn and Jack o' Clubs.

"Brandon, shake hands with Silent Spence," said Jelks, next day. "Maybe Silent, here, kin tell ye somethin' about the hostiles along the Platte, and beyant. Brandon's bound fer the

Oregon Trail, Silent, him and the boy—jest them."

Spence, six feet, three, straight as an Indian, and fully as copper-brown; with black hair that swept his buckskin shoulders, eyes wide apart and of piercing black, a hawk's nose and a good, straight mouth, gave Big Dave a hand of steel, and a "Howdy," and went on calmly smoking his pipe. He was wordless for several minutes, but Brandon waited patiently, understanding something of the nature of the man. When Spence spoke, he gave his words deliberately, retracing the trail of memory, as he went along:

"When I left Jim at Fort Bridger three months back, the Injuns were makin' big medicine—restless. Cheyennes were carryin' th' war-pipe to the Sioux agin' the Pawnees and the Shoshoni. White Bull and a band of thirty Oglallas had jest bin wiped out by Crows and Shoshoni, and Crazy Horse was raisin' th' red ax. Bridger reckoned th' great medicine arrer of the Cheyennes was mixed up in it, somehow. Seems like the Cheyennes had lost their big medicine, the magic arrer, durin' a Pawnee raid. Then the Oglallas caught the Pawnees nappin,' lifted a lot of h'ar and carried the sacred arrer away with them. Next thing, Pawnees ambush Oglallas and take White Bull's skelp, with about thirty more fer good measure. But they didn't get the arrer. Seems like the Oglallas finally sold it back to the Cheyennes fer a hundred ponies. It made a lot of bad blood all

'round. When Injuns paint red again' each other, white men are apt to git ketched in between 'less their medicine is powerful strong."

"Maybe the trouble hasn't started yet," suggested Brandon.

"H'ain't heerd definite," said Spence, but I wouldn't be a mite s'prised if it had. Still, that ain't the worst of it. Winter before last was a black winter among the tribes. Cramps and small-pox. Very bad. Mato-Wayubi, Old Conquering Bear, told me the Injuns were blamin' the whites for causin' what he called 'the-people-had-spotted-death-winter.' A lot of braves went to their happy hunting grounds. Injuns say their bones must be covered."

This news troubled Brandon. Was it right, he asked himself, to take Davy into the hills if what such men as Bridger and Spence were saying was likely to happen?

" 'Course, if ye're bent on goin' on," said Spence, "I don't know that I'd let Injun worries hold me back. P'raps the worst danger is from a band of Cheyennes who're said to be led by a half-white renegade they call 'Two-Fingers.' Jim and I hev heerd yarns aplenty about this feller, though we never cut his trail. Seems like his mother was a Cheyenne squaw which gave him a big drag with the tribe. His father was a French fur trapper who settled in the Smoky Hills region, back in the thirties, and who got a grant of land from the Cheyennes. The head men of the Cheyennes don't cotton much to this Two Fingers party, but he's big

medicine with the young hot-heads who're allus ready fer the warpath. You want to keep yer eye peeled fer him, Brandon. He's a murderin' devil, by all accounts."

"Thanks, Spence," said Big Dave. "I'm not likely to forget a word of what you've told me. Where is Mr. Bridger now?"

"Jim? Oh, he's some'r's 'round Fort Laramie, or up the Horseshoe. I surmise Jim's tryin' to palaver with the Sioux and keep 'em out of a general mixup. Jim stands ace-high with Red Cloud."

"Hope I run across him," said Brandon. "He's a grand man."

"Jim kin take keer of himself, all right," said Spence, with a dry smile. "Maybe I'll run across ye, myself, before many weeks. I'm goin' up to Fort Union with Stevens's supply gang, then I'm goin' to strike straight west to the Hills."

As the days passed, Brandon's apprehensions, roused by his talk with Spence, gave way to his natural optimism and the hope which fired him. Before the *Oregon* sighted Council Bluffs he had made up his mind that he could win through; that it was his duty to go on. At the Bluffs he said farewell to the expedition, and after outfitting, crossed the river and took the Oregon Trail, the longest road yet developed in the United States, the ancient path which had been beaten by the buffalo and the Indians. The sun-bleached bones of the great animal

which was food and clothing—life itself—to the Red Men, marked every mile of the trail.

Day after day, he and little Davy fared along the broad and easy trail to Grand Island, where the Platte River dipped farthest south, and where the trail veered to the southern bank; to Fort Kearney, where it returned to the north fork, and on toward the fur-trading post at Laramie. Lonely days were brightened when they met east-bound wagon trains rolling in from the Oregon, or when travelers overtook and passed them. As Brandon approached the gateway of his dreams he became a new man. Ambition drove him and high hope illuminated his mind. As for little Davy, the overland journey was a daily joy. He thrived in the new life. He had never been so happy. He learned the trick of new and manly things. Brandon taught him secrets of the trail. He learned how to cook, how to care for horses. He grew taller and stronger.

Upon the Laramie Plains they turned into the St. Vrain Trail to the Laramie Mountains, or the Black Hills, as some called them, the low, savagely broken range around which the Oregon Trail swung in a wide detour of almost two hundred miles. It was in this labyrinth of gorges and peaks that the surveyor felt his work must begin—the search for the pass which would make possible the railway, the great railway which would link East and West.

CHAPTER V

THE PASS

As they rode the trail or camped at night, Brandon explained to Davy the heart of the problem he had set himself to solve.

"Most folks think it's the Rocky Mountains that'll hold up the railroad," he said. "That ain't so. The road can top the Rockies, high as they are. Those passes are known. What's needed is a short cut through these foothills to save hundreds of miles of building."

With the practiced eye of a surveyor—and Brandon was a first-rate civil-engineer in spite of the fact that he had never "amounted to anything"—he studied the topsy-turvy terrain into which an Indian trail was leading them from the Laramie Plains. It was a very narrow path, barely two feet wide, yet so worn down by the countless unshod hooves of Indian ponies and the moccasined feet of red men that its sinuous, hard-beaten surface was half a foot below the level of the sod.

"What we've got to locate, son, is a reasonably straight line through these hills, one that a railroad can follow through from the plains on the east to the plains on the west, a series of easy ridges connecting up with each other at

low grade, or with gaps that can be bridged or filled in," he told Davy, as day after day he took his bearings and made observations from the crests of sawtoothed ranges. They were days of disappointment. Ridges that at first seemed promising ended against impassable buttes or in ravines that led nowhere.

"I doubt if the Lord ever made another such country," he said to Davy. "Begins to look as if only the birds could get over it in a straight line."

"You'll find the way, Daddy," said Davy. "I just know it. My daddy can do anything he sets out to do."

"Bless your heart, son," said Big Dave, as he gave his comforter a hug that made the boy wince. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

From the headwaters of Lodge Pole Creek, they turned southward through the ranges so savagely gashed and twisted by earth paroxysms of a million years before their day. It was hard, dangerous traveling, but Brandon persevered, conviction growing upon him, though there was nothing to feed it, that, somewhere in this mad, weird jumble of red sandstone buttes and mountain-rimmed ravines, lay the road the Iron Horse must follow.

"Guess it's the land God forgot," said Davy, as their wondering gaze took in the fantastic shapes into which erosion had sculptured the sandstone. Relics of an incredibly ancient inland sea, the greater buttes reared up like bat-

tlements of medieval castles, while among the lesser freaks of the warm sandstone were grotesquely familiar mushrooms, umbrellas and hour-glasses.

These strange monuments raised to the childhood of mankind by that whimsical architect, Nature, were arresting, even beautiful, in the brilliant sunshine of June, but at night the wizardry of the setting sun made them unbelievably lovely. Failing light and deepening shadow painted them orange, mauve and purple, and deep, deep blue. They seemed monsters ready to stir to action.

Forests of pine loomed among the stark buttes, while battalions of slim birch marched in silvery beauty along the borders of the swift mountain streams. The land was astir with game. White-tailed deer were past counting along the brooks at early morning or late evening. Lordly moose snorted in the beaver bogs. Black and brown bear rooted and grunted over decayed logs, prying and pawing for the grubs and ants they found so sweet to the taste. "Old Ephraim," the grizzly, ranged the hills, undisputed monarch. There was no lack of meat for the larder and Davy went wild with joy over the wonderful brook trout that swarmed to his hook.

When night came on and their camp was hemmed in by the whispering, stirring dark and its stealthy prowlers, they sat close by the heaped-up fire needed for comfort as well as for protection in the sharp air of the high alti-

tude. When mountain lion or lynx shrieked or squalled in the timber, Davy nestled against his daddy. He heard the call of the gray wolf packs hunting deer through the valleys, and the trembling, mournful night song of the coyotes which, jackal-like, followed the wolves for leavings, or sneaked in a far circle around the camp of the Brandons, magnetized by the fire-glow and the maddening smell of food. Often the coyote concert ended with a shrill, sobbing cry, like the shuddering scream of a woman in agony, a shriek which ran up and down the scale of maniacal mirth. In the daytime, forest and plain vibrated with the melody of birds, and overhead Davy watched migrations of wild ducks and Canada geese, flights so vast that they clouded the sun.

They had met no white men, nor had they expected to find any. A long way off they had twice sighted Indian-hunting parties, Brandon guessed, for the led-ponies seemed to be burdened with game. One party passed along a parallel ridge as father and son made their way south. Several times Big Dave had marked smoke signals from distant ridges, and had explained to Davy how the red men telegraphed to each other, with puffs of smoke, spreading a blanket to cut and control the smoke columns which rose from a fire of green stuff. He believed, however, that he had managed to keep out of the sight of even chance parties, but he never relaxed vigilance, and some thought of Silent Spence's warning of the renegade chief

of the Cheyennes kept pricking at the back of his mind.

Late in June, as they forded a tributary of Crow Creek, Brandon got a shock of alarm. Less than a quarter of a mile distant, an Indian, sitting a calico pony, was visible upon the spur of a half-wooded ridge. Brandon had only a glimpse. The Indian swiftly backed his pony over the ridge and out of sight. But Big Dave knew he had been seen by this red sentinel.

Saying nothing to Davy, he led the way into the stunted pine which climbed the ridge they had been following. Ascending, they made the crest of the ridge and found that it stretched away to the south, unbroken, so far as eye could see. Brandon's pulse quickened. He had already made sure of its unbroken progress from the north. The ominous picture of the Indian scout faded from his mind as he led the way along the backbone of the curving range. They rode steadily from midday until late in the afternoon, the path stretching ahead of them, untroubled by gorge or declivity, a broad path upon which no white man probably, had ever set foot. As the shadows lengthened, Brandon's intent gazed finally marked what he had dreaded. The ridge was now descending. The timber was thinning and opening out. He could see farther ahead and more clearly. The ridge was dropping toward the rock wall of a mountain range towering east and west, at right angles to their path. There was no outlet that he could detect. But he kept going, following

a twisting trail, peering ahead. The horses rounded a low butte. At once he had a view of the dark mountain range which blocked their course. Big Dave's glance fell all at once upon a break in the tremendous barrier, a gap through which the sun was shining, the purple plains beyond faintly visible. He stared until his eyes ached. Now that it loomed squarely in front of him, this titanic slash in the mountain wall, toward which the gently descending ridge was trending as straight as road could travel, he found it hard to accept its existence.

His heart pounded. He wanted to sing, to shout. It was the pass! His pass! No finer natural gateway through the hills could have been hoped for than that tremendous rift at the very foot of the ridge he had traveled for many miles. His mind swirled with plans. With a week's work he could map the region, preparing field notes to convince the skeptical. He would have the proof for them, in black and white, in cold figures!—proof that a railroad from the Missouri, easily making its way over the plains along the old Oregon Trail and the Platte, could build straight through the Laramie Mountains instead of making the long detour. Here was the pass which Providence itself must have hewed in that mad labyrinth of criss-crossing ranges. The future shaped itself. He would return to Springfield with his notes and figures. Lincoln would get him a hearing. How Tom Marsh would stare! Brandon grinned at the thought. Then for New York and the big men

waiting to be shown! This pass was no dream. It was real. It would mean fortune for many men. The road builders, uniting East and West, would be richer than old Astor. Davy! What it would mean for Davy! Everything he had missed in his old life of struggle and toil. He caught Davy to him.

"Son, I've found it!"

Slowly extending his arm, he guided the boy's gaze toward that glorious rift in the mountain wall.

"Look straight ahead. Follow the line of the dropping ridge 'til it loses itself in the blue and purple. Now, off to the left a little."

"I see it!" cried Davy. "It's a big cut, right through the mountains. You could drive a herd of cattle through it, Daddy, looks like."

"They'll drive the railroad through it, son. The Iron Horse will thunder through that cut straight to the Rocky Mountains, and over them to the Pacific Ocean. It's ours, son! Here's where the road must come, the only place in these hills it can get through."

In the growing dusk they made camp, in sight of the magic pass. They talked with the eager light-heartedness of two children. Big Dave could not take his eyes from the distant gorge. Continually he returned to study it, as he unpacked the horses, picketed them for the night, cut firewood and built the shakedown beds. As Davy made a fire and got it going briskly, Brandon walked back and forth until darkness fell, feeding his soul upon the gateway of hope. Out

in the darkness an owl hooted and was quickly answered.

When it grew so black that he could no longer feast his eyes, he sat down upon a giant pine, a blowdown from a storm of half a century past, and watched Davy preparing supper, happier than he had ever been in all his life. As he stooped to get a brand for his pipe, he noticed the ax which Davy had left lying upon the ground. He picked it up and sank the shining blade into the log at his side. Reseating himself, he leaned toward the fire, lighting his pipe, smiling at the boy whose face was flushed from the heat of cooking. He was straightening up when a sound came to his ear, the snap of a twig —close by. Springing from the log, he caught Davy to him, his hand covering the boy's mouth.

"Sh-h-h!" he breathed, his lips against Davy's ear.

Sweeping a rapid glance around the clearing, brightly lit by the campfire, he saw that the rains of many years had hollowed a pit behind the great log upon which he had been sitting. He carried Davy to the log and lowered him into the hollow, warning the boy to silence with eyes and upraised finger. He backed away from the log, noiselessly, swiftly circling the clearing, keeping in the shadows as much as possible, avoiding the betrayal of the firelight. He found his rifle where he had leaned it against a tree, near the picketed horses, which stood, heads held high, nostrils dilated, the white of their eyes showing.

"Might have been a bear, though they don't come anywhere close to a fire," he thought. "Don't like the way the horses are acting—"

The crack of a rifle split the silence. Brandon dropped to one knee, firing at the sound. From all around him came flash and report. He heard bullets tearing through the trees. He could see nothing. Again came the hooting of owls. He heard faint sounds, twigs snapping. He felt, rather than heard the furtive approach, and his worry grew for he guessed that the Indians—if Indians they were—were working around the camp, surrounding it. He turned swiftly from side to side, eyes straining at flitting shadows. To the right he spied movement and fired again, missing in the darkness. Next instant the night was hideous with the war cries of dark figures breaking from the timber.

"They're all around me," he thought, despair in his heart. "Oh, God, don't let 'em find Davy!"

He fired as quickly as he could reload, but in the darkness he knew it was useless. Hands seized him from behind, clutching his throat, choking him cruelly, bearing him to the earth. In a moment he was helpless in the grip of three painted warriors whose black eyes darted diamond flashes in the firelight.

The brush parted. A figure sprang upon the old log, not ten feet from where Davy lay hidden. The boy could see that this man was garbed from head to foot in fringed buckskin,

and that his head was bound with a scarf. Powerful, deep-chested, his every motion and pose expressed ruthless command. He carried a rifle in his left hand and a war ax in his beaded belt. With a fierce cry he stilled the wolf-like howling of the braves. From his vantage point upon the log he studied his prisoner across the clearing, crushed to his knees, arms twisted behind him, helpless in a throttling grip, chin thrust upward, eyes burning through the half light. The wide mouth stretched in an evil smile. The dark face glowed with infernal joy.

"Na-eso-yu-tuhi!" he snapped in the Cheyenne tongue. "I come to him. He is mine!"

As he stood poised upon the log, Davy marked the brutality of the face, his heart lead in his breast. Crouched behind the log, so close to the Cheyenne chief that he could have reached out and touched him, but hidden by darkness and the bushes, Davy cautiously raised his head until the level of his eyes was above the trunk of the fallen tree. He was terribly frightened, for his daddy and himself. He wanted to go to him—to help him—but he caught the warning in his father's eyes. Before he could move the left hand of the Indian dropped the rifle and slowly reached back and to one side, to where the ax handle jutted from the log. Back came the hand, found the handle, closed around it, a frightful hand. The firelight fell squarely upon its mutilation. There were only two fingers, the rest was a scarred and blunted stump. The two horrible fingers closed firmly around

the ax handle, caught it in an iron grip and jerked it free. The man sprang from the log, lithe as a puma, despite his bulk and brawn. Davy stared in dreadful fascination. He could not move, he could not look away. His daddy! What was going to happen to him! Oh, God, help daddy!

He saw the Cheyenne leader stop squarely in front of the kneeling man, mocking the prisoner with a laugh. He saw a flicker of cruel amusement in the eyes of the Indians holding his father. He heard his daddy cry out: "Why, you're a white man!" He heard the vicious reply, dripping with the venom of hate: "You'll never tell that to anybody else, damn you!"

He saw that horrible, mutilated hand draw back to arm's length, saw it raise the ax high in air, saw his father's tortured eyes, saw the ax descend in a swift and flashing curve—then knew no more.

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE CHILD IN THE DARK

THERE was utter quiet in the great circle of darkness around the dying campfire. Every furtive rustling of the night had ceased. The creatures of the woods and the mountains were frozen to silence. The air was tainted by man, and by something which both drew and repelled, pungent, acrid; tightening steel-spring muscles and slavering jaws. They waited, with the unhurried patience of the wild.

After a long time, hours, the fiercest of their company moved with a swaggering shuffle, swinging its blunt head and grotesque mask of a face, moved without the snapping of a twig or the rustling of a leaf to the edge of the circle, its wicked eyes shining green, its steel claws sheathing and unsheathing as the scent struck full upon its twitching nostrils. It paused at the clearing. Nothing stirred. The fire was low, a mere curl of smoke from graying coals.

The wolverine shuffled into the clearing, poised like a dancer; cunning, yet savage with hunger. The wicked little eyes darted to the beaten-down grass where the horses of the Brandons had pawed in their terror; to the trampled ground on the other side of the fire, to the sprawling bulk of the dead man, one leg twisted

under the body, face pressed to the sod; and, finally, to another figure, small, motionless, a crumpled heap, behind a great log. The wolverine knew there was nothing to be feared from the figure on the ground. Death had been there. But there was life in the small heap behind the log. It waited, doubtful, alert. Suddenly it crouched. Keen ears had caught a sound. So rapidly that eye could scarcely have followed its movements, it lost itself in the blackness.

Davy, after lying for hours in merciful unconsciousness, had stirred. His eyes had been wide open for a long time, but his mind had been paralyzed. He could not think, could not place himself. Vaguely he wondered why it was so dark. Usually it was bright morning before his sleepy eyelids sprang apart. Why was he lying here in this strange, cold spot, behind a log? Where was his daddy and his daddy's comforting arm that he loved to nestle against in the night? Remembrance struck him like a blow—his daddy, helpless, crushed to his knees in the grip of cruel hands, his anguished but courageous face; the man who leaped from the log toward the kneeling prisoner, his devilish smile and mocking words, the lifted ax, the downward-striking blow.

He clenched his fists, throwing his arms wide in the reflex of hopeless misery. One arm brushed the log. His heart was bursting, yet he could not weep. He lifted himself from the cold, damp hollow, and stretched his stiffened body. He could not bring himself to look across

A William Fox Production

"WHY, YOU'RE A WHITE MAN!"

The Iron Horse.

the clearing. For a long time he kept his back turned, then forced himself to walk toward his father's body—to bend down.

He touched the cold hand of the murdered man. The fingers had stiffened. Davy's warm hand could not bend them around his own. It was this which opened the gates of anguish. Tears came in a flood. The wild things in the forest cover heard new, strange sounds, sounds that had never before reached their ears, human weeping. Sobs that wrenched the boy's breast echoed through the forest. The night faded into the first, ghostly gray of dawn. Then true light came, little shafts of sunshine searching paths along the wood lanes. The full day was striding over the mountains before Davy conquered his grief and compelled himself to do that which had to be done.

He could not force himself to look at his father's face. The thought of it made him cold. He wanted to remember his daddy's face as he had seen it last, anguished, but dauntless with courage, smiling calmly into the savage eyes which threatened. He found a blanket the Indians had left behind when they took the horses away and spread it over the body as best he could, tucking in the edges. Then he set to work with the shovel, overlooked in the looting of the camp.

Hour after hour he labored, struggling with the hard ground and the hidden roots and rocks, stopping every little while as misery racked him, thoughts of his daddy's love and kindness

tearing open the wounds of his agony. When the time came he pushed into the shallow grave the formless bundle, turning his face away as the blanket dropped from his father's head, and replacing it with groping hands that twitched and shrank from the touch of cold flesh. Then he covered the body with the new earth. Before the mound was raised he was so tired that he could barely lift his arms. He rested, easing the ache of his muscles.

As he sat, face buried in his hands, a thought came to him. He went to the campfire, where the packs had lain. The Indians had taken away all food, and nearly everything else, even to Brandon's surveying instruments, but they had thrown aside the few books that the surveyor had brought with him—Davy's "Robinson Crusoe," some works on mathematics, Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor"—over which daddy used to laugh so much—and the Bible, which had mother's name on the flyleaf. She had given it to daddy many years ago, before they were married: "To Dearest David, from Mary."

The tears started again. But there was courage in the little lad, courage and the resolution to go through with what must be done. He turned the pages until he found what he sought, the Psalms of David, the two songs of praise that his father liked best because they had been Davy's mother's favorites.

He went back to the mound of brown earth,

where the shovel lay. Kneeling, his voice shaking, breaking into sobs, he read:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

"My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.

"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

And, stumbling a little over the big words:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil—"

So he read, kneeling by the grave he had digged with his own hands, his clear young voice echoing in the forest silence.

He neither saw nor heard the men who had come to the edge of the clearing, white men treading swiftly, soundlessly; and who now stood, heads bared, watching, listening, as Davy poured the misery of his heart into the wonderful words of the Shepherd King. They waited until the boy closed the book, until he had followed his father's soul with a message of his own expressed only by falling tears and moving lips. Then one of them handed his rifle to a bearded follower and walked slowly across the clearing.

Davy heard the footsteps and started to his

feet. He saw the light of recognition in the man's eyes as big, muscular arms closed around him.

"Why, it's the little feller! You remember me, son? From the boat goin' up the Missouri? Spence?"

Davy could not speak. He could only cling closer, his head pressed to the buckskin shirt, but he remembered. It was the tall man his father had talked with on the trip up river, Bridger's man, Silent Spence, who had told them about the Indian country.

"Now, now, little feller, you're all safe. We'll take care of you. Don't talk about it. There's not much you can tell me."

His first glance around the clearing had revealed to Spence the whole story of the tragedy, down to the last detail—man and boy surprised at their campfire, the murder of the father, the boy's escape (how he could not guess), the looting of the camp, the disappearance of the raiders. One of the men spoke:

"By G—! Spence, did ye ever see the beat of it—that kid buryin' his dad and givin' him the best funeral he could?"

Spence shut him up with a gesture. He motioned to his men to gather up the few odds and ends, the books and a few tools.

"You scout ahead on the back trail," he ordered, and one of the bearded men slipped into the forest.

"Now, son—Davy's your name, ain't it?—

we'll be makin' tracks toward Laramie. This ain't a healthy country right now. This is Cheyenne work. I know their signs. We'll talk about that later. Questions I want to ask. D'ye feel able to travel?"

Davy nodded. His heart was still too heavy for talk. Later he was to understand the miracle of his rescue. Spence had been scouting eastward with a small party, sent by the trader at Fort Laramie to get reliable news of alarming reports. They had been camping near Crow Creek when the sound of rifle firing, barely audible, at a great distance, reached them. Spence's trained ear made out in the firing the heavy report of a Sharpe's, and to him every rifle spoke with an individual voice. Indians did not carry Sharpe's rifles as a general thing, so he reasoned that a white man or white men had been jumped by hostiles. Leaving two men in charge of the camp, he hurried southward with the others, traveling fast, until he picked up the trail of a small party of Indians that had veered eastward only a little while before. They had followed this trail to the clearing where the Brandons had camped.

From the camp on Crow Creek, where Spence made the boy take food and strong coffee, they made their way westward, taking the Laramie Trail. Davy rode behind Spence or one of the others. They made the settlement, twenty-five miles, late that evening, with Davy exhausted and carried in Spence's arms. He was asleep

when they put him to bed in a room back of the old trading store, and it was late the following morning before he opened his eyes. Miserable as he was, he felt better after he had doused his face in the waterbucket and still better when he had made a hearty breakfast upon venison and bannock, with coffee to wash it down.

In every boy there is astonishing resiliency. Davy was conscious of interest in his new surroundings, in the rude trading post that had been built as far back as 1821 by the French trader, Jacques La Ramie, in the fort, with its quadrangle of huge logs, its watchtowers at the four corners, and in the humans that moved about the enclosure or outside the stockade among the tepees, shacks and dugouts. Friendly Shoshoni, haters of the Cheyennes, were in to trade their pelts, their tanned buckskins, for powder and ball, and the food of the white man; tall, splendid-looking red men carrying themselves haughtily. Happy-faced Frenchmen from the north, fur trappers mostly, with an interpreter or two of mixed blood; teamsters from the Oregon country, strapping fellows, usually well-liquored with the traders' tanglefoot whisky at two bits the drink; and lean, hawk-faced scouts, free lances of a thousand trails of mountain and plain, the eyes of the scattered posts of the fur company. They quickened Davy's interest, helping him to put aside his misery.

Silent Spence came to him later in the day.

He found a seat upon the bench outside the trading store and pulled at his pipe a long time without saying a word. Then:

"I've been thinkin' over your situation, little feller," he said. "You've been kind of a puzzle, what to do with, but kind o' works out this way. I'm driftin' on West, to Californy—got some business out there—and I aim to take you to Sacramento. I know jest th' place for you. A boy hadn't oughter grow up without schoolin' and you can git it there. I've figgered it all out, Davy, and it's the best bet as the cards lay. This country's no place for a boy to be knockin' around in, 'specially when there's Injun trouble. So to-morrow we'll hit the trail."

Davy's story had become known to everybody in the trading post. His misfortunes and, most of all, his manliness and his bright face, had won the hearts of the roughest of the folk collected at the post. They felt that something should be done, but nobody did anything until Mrs. Steele, the trader's wife, took affairs into her capable hands.

"Laws amighty!" she said that night to her spouse. "You men make me sick. You all stand around and talk, talk, talk! Why don't you do somethin' fer that fatherless boy?"

"What kin a feller do?" asked Bill Steele, as one who craves instruction from on high.

"Well, if I must tell you, you big lummox," said the wife of his bosom, "you can pick up that hat of yours layin' there and drag your

lazy hulk out to every man jack in the post. Tell 'em to spill all they can afford into the hat, and when they've done that, to reach fer more. It'd be a cryin' shame to start that child out without means!"

"Reckoned Spence was seein' after the boy," said Bill.

"You reckoned!" said Mrs. Steele, scornfully. "Show me your tracks, Bill Steele!"

Bill got, willingly enough, for he was a good-hearted fellow, and the result of his circuit of the post was amazing. Everybody had contributed, the French trappers, the swearing mule-whackers, the scouts and, to Steele's surprise, even the Indians. Bill turned over coin, nuggets and gold dust that Spence roughly figured out to the value of $1,000, a lot of money in those days. Mrs. Steele completely reclothed Davy, then entrusted to Spence a small pack stuffed with extra clothing, articles from the shelves of Bill's store, a pair of boots, shirts, handkerchiefs, a hat and, best of all, a beautifully tanned and beaded buckskin shirt, breeches and moccasins, a present from the squaws in the Shoshoni camp near the fort.

They started next morning, Spence, Davy and an old scout named Horn that everybody called "Powder." He had come into the country in '22, with General Ashley and Bridger and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company's outfit, and there he had taken root. To Davy the old man took a vast liking, for the boy's smile seemed to open all hearts. It was

old Powder who gradually withdrew Davy's mind from mournful thoughts. He told him a hundred tales of the old days, of the trip he had made with Bridger to the Great Salt Lake, the first white men, probably, to gaze upon that strange, inland sea, though there was a legend of a visit made by the Spanish friar, Father Escalante, as far back as 1776; of the many Indian fights he had taken part in, and of the struggles and battles between the rival fur companies.

"But times is changin'!" said the old man. "Fur critters are skeerce, compared to what they once was. Country's gittin' crowded like. Don't look like there's much new country left."

For three months they rode the trail, following the well-beaten road to the Green River, then southeast through Nevada and the foothills of the Sierra and over the mountains past Donner Lake along an old emigrant trail. At Emigrant Gap they descended the Sierra Nevadas at the headwaters of the American River, and moved down into the valley of the Sacramento. They came to the town late in September. Spence took Davy to the home of Henry Brewster, a friend of many years. To the Brewsters he told Davy's story and asked them if they would give Davy a home and see to his schooling. Mrs. Brewster took Davy straight to her motherly heart.

"He shall be our own boy," she said. "If little Henry had lived he'd be this laddie's age. It will cheer up the house to have him about."

"I can be a lot of help, ma'am," said David, sturdily. "I used to sort o' keep house for daddy."

"Bless your heart," said good Mrs. Brewster. "Housekeepin's no work for a man-child. There'll be plenty of chores for a lively boy, goodness knows, but we'll see about that."

"The boy pays his way," said Spence. He handed them the buckskin bag, heavy with gold.

CHAPTER VII

A WHITE EAGLE WITH A RED HEART

In Sacramento, in the home of the Brewsters, Davy Brandon came happily to young manhood. He had good schooling from a Bostonian, a stern, hard-handed pedagogue, yet with a rare faculty of interesting his pupils. No fonder of books than any other young human animal, Davy studied faithfully, nevertheless, because he had given his promise to Spence for whom he had an affection that touched idolatry. Spence had been kind to his daddy. Spence had brought him to safety and a home. So Davy waited and worked, yearning for the time when he could join his hero in that rugged company of eagle men who ranged the mountains and the plains.

During these years, in which he shot up like a young pine, he helped Henry Brewster keep the store which did a brisk trade with gold seekers and settlers heading west, and with the travelers who had made their pile or who had been conquered by the country and were turning back to the easier ways of the settled East. To Ma Brewster Davy had become as dear as if he had been her own flesh and blood. He found a thousand little ways of easing her burdens. She blessed the day that Silent

Spence brought the orphaned boy to her home.

"He's just the *best* boy that ever was," Ma Brewster often said to husband or neighbors. " 'Course, he's got plenty of spirit and devilment in him. He won't let anybody run over him, not a mite. But he's sweet and fine, is Davy, with a heart like gold."

In later years this part of his life was always dim and vague to Davy, perhaps because it had been so secure, peaceful and happy. It was ended when he was nearing his twenty-second year, ended with sadness. Ma Brewster, whose health had been failing for years, succumbed to an illness that even her gallant spirit could not conquer. She passed her last hour on earth with her hand in Davy's. A few weeks after her death Henry Brewster announced his intention of returning to Indiana.

"Now that Ma has gone, I just don't care to hang on here any longer," he said, as they sat together in the home which seemed so empty and lonely. "I have done pretty well, Davy. I've made enough to keep me comfortable the rest of my life. Better come with me. I'll buy a good farm back in Dearborn county, on the Ohio, and we'll run it together. When I'm gone it'll all be yours."

"Uncle Hank," said Davy, "you have been good to me—a real father—and I know what I owe you. If you need me, I'll go. But my heart is here in the West. There are things I feel I must do. You know how my daddy died—murdered by a white man, butchered

with an ax while he was held down. There's never a day passed, Uncle Hank, that I haven't said to myself, 'I've got to find that man and pay him out.' If I ever run across him—and I'll follow his trail for years if I ever strike it—I'll kill him with my bare hands.

"Then there's the railroad that people are talking so much about. Some think it will never be built. But it will be, Uncle Hank. Daddy believed in it with all his heart. That's what brought him West, hope of finding a possible line for the road through the foothills and the mountains. He used to talk to me for hours about the road and what it would do for the country. He always said he wanted me to have some part in it. Maybe you think I'm foolish, but I believe my daddy is watching me, hoping I will find a way to help the road, to lend a hand in building it.

"I hate to part from you, Uncle Hank, but that's the way I feel about it. I wanted you to understand, but I'll go back East with you if you say you need me."

Henry Brewster sat pulling at his pipe, the same old, strong-smelling pipe that poor Ma Brewster used to rail against so often. For several minutes he held his peace, staring into the leaping flame of the fireplace.

"I reckon," he said slowly, "you're on the right trail, Davy. I don't hold much by vengeance, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I can understand your feelings. If I was young I guess I'd feel about the same. I guess

I'd want to keep goin' until I'd got my hands around the neck of that murderin' devil. A white renegade is a thousand times worse'n the Injuns he excites to wickedness. How do you calculate to come up with him?"

"I don't know yet," said Davy. "But I know the country he ranged in with his Cheyennes, the bad lands east of Laramie. That was his hangout, in the hills. The last I heard of Spence he was back at Fort Laramie. I thought if you didn't need me, I might travel east with you to the fort, find Spence and maybe pick up news."

"That's the best plan," said Brewster. "You're a grown man, Davy. Not many around here can best you with rifle, revolver or fists, but you'll need Spence's long head. You're free to go. I'd like to have you, boy, but I won't stand in your way."

Brewster had a buyer for the store, one anxious enough for the trade to pay a fair price, so this matter was quickly disposed of. When everything had been sold, excepting the few household articles that he wanted to take back East, they completed their plans for the journey. Brewster surprised and delighted Davy one morning by presenting him with a complete new outfit, a fine stallion, half-thoroughbred, of great speed and staying power; a Mexican saddle and bridle gay with inlay of silver and, best of all, a beautiful rifle, and a pair of Colt's revolvers.

"It's little enough," said the old man, gruffly,

when Davy thanked him and protested that the presents were too costly. "You have been a good boy. Ma loved you like her own son and this would have pleased her. I want to see you outfitted proper, with horse and gear that you can depend on."

A week afterward they took the road, with a wagon train bound for Fort Kearney. They made their way through Placerville, the Washoe Silver Mines and Camp Floyd, and on to Salt Lake City and the new Jerusalem that the Latter Day Saints had raised up by the great salty sea. Then they turned north and followed the well-beaten road to Bridger and to Fort Laramie, where Davy said farewell to Henry Brewster, watching with a heavy heart as his foster father fell into the long, dusty line of wagons and mounted men.

He could not find Spence in the throng of white and red at Laramie, but had news of him. His old friend was up the Powder River, Davy learned, hunting with Mata-Tatonka's tribe of Oglallas, old friends of his, though bitterly hostile at times to other whites. Much later, but not from his friend, Davy heard the story of how Henry Spence saved Mata-Tatonka's mother, sisters and young brothers from a raiding party of Crows who had descended on the Oglalla village many years before, when the fighting men were absent making a buffalo "surround," and only the old men, the women and the children were left in camp. Spence, with two companions, happened to arrive as a

war party of Crows, bent on horse-stealing and scalp-lifting, struck the unprotected village. The mountain men gave the raiders a bitter lesson, killing a dozen and saving nearly a hundred women, children and old men from slaughter or captivity. Mata-Tatonka, "Bull-Bear," was a young man when that famous fight took place, and was with his father, old Mata-Tatonka, on the buffalo hunt. When the warriors returned, heard the tale and saw the trophies, Crow scalps and a score of horses, the old chief held a great feast. He adopted Spence and his men into the Bear Clan, making them his blood brothers. Old Mata-Tatonka was called by the Great Spirit, and young Mata-Tatonka was elected by the old men to take his father's place, but the brotherhood was sacred to him and to every painted warrior of the tribe.

Davy determined to journey to Mata-Tatonka's village on Powder River and could not be dissuaded by the trader. His confidence was justified, and three days after he left Fort Laramie he rode into the straggling village of tepees to be greeted immediately by Henry Spence. Mata-Tatonka received them in his lodge where Spence lived when with the tribe, and gave them the place of honor. The chief was the finest looking red man Davy had ever seen. Erect, he stood more than six feet, carrying himself with an assured air of power and inflexible resolution. Throughout the tribe his will was law. Craft, real sagacity and much

success in the incessant warfares of the Sioux against Crows, Pawnees, Arapahoes and the Gros Ventres Blackfeet had won him great renown.

Spence presented Davy as his younger brother and Mata-Tatonka greeted the youth with a deep, resonant, "How!" and with a handgrip that made Davy wince. He looked every inch the savage prince of a powerful people. The white men remained silent, obeying the etiquette demanded. Mata-Tatonka's first wife handed her lord his ceremonial pipe, of carved red sandstone, and filled it with the mixture of tobacco and red willow root which the Sioux preferred to the unadulterated weed. Mata-Tatonka lifted the pipe to the four quarters, indulged in a whiff, then passed it from right to left, handing it first to the newcomer. Davy imitated his host, then passed the pipe to Spence who, in turn, whiffed a little cloud of smoke before returning it to the chief. The squaw replaced it on the wall of the tepee, where it hung with a hundred trophies of battle and the chase. Followed a silence in which Mata-Tatonka studied Davy without especially seeming to do so, yet Davy was thoroughly aware that the fierce black eyes were probing him.

"It is good," said Mata-Tatonka, presently. "They say a young eagle has flown from the mountain top. They say it is a white eagle with a red heart. It is Mata-Tatonka's wish that the youth who smiles will spread his robe

in this lodge. Mata-Tatonka shall be his elder brother."

Spence translated, saying to Davy: "Your medicine is strong. You have made a fine impression on the chief. He likes your style. Better offer him something—give him a present—if you have anything."

"Say to the great war chief that I am only a young man who has performed no great deeds and who lacks words to thank so renowned a warrior as Mata-Tatonka," said Davy. "Tell him that I am proud to be his friend. Say to him that I have brought him a present."

Spence, highly pleased, spoke rapidly in the Oglalla tongue and Mata-Tatonka's eyes gleamed, though his stern face remained impassive. Davy hastened from the lodge, searched his pack and found a handsome hunting knife, with an unusually long blade and silver-mounted handle. Returning, he placed the fine knife in Mata-Tatonka's hand, almost melting the chief's iron reserve.

"Mata-Tatonka will count many coups with his new knife," he said proudly. "He will have many new scalps of Crow dogs to hang in his lodge. It is good!"

He called to his squaw and meat was served, buffalo rump boiled with a sweet root that Davy had never before tasted, the whole good and well-cooked. The squaw served it in ladles of horn. After meat they smoked a long while with no word spoken. Then Spence asked per-

mission to see Mata-Tatonka's winter count, something few white men had ever looked upon, the jealously-guarded and almost sacred record of the tribe, written in pictographs winter after winter, for a century and a half, upon the dressed inner side of a white buffalo robe. The winter count ran in spirals from the center, a series of widening circles, each circle composed of a succession of crude, yet eloquent pictures recording some significant event that marked each year of Oglalla history. Mata-Tatonka himself arose, found the tribal record and carefully unrolled it from its covering of skins. He spread it upon the floor of the lodge.

Spence's forefinger traced backward, as he mentally computed the years in white men's terms. Then, with his finger pointing to a crow which seemed to be falling, broken-winged from the air, he spoke.

"As my brother sees, this was Killed-Many-Crows-Winter," he said to Mata-Tatonka, and added to Davy:

"It was the year Mata-Tatonka's father whipped the Crows on Lodge Pole Creek, the same year your daddy was killed in the Black Hills. Counting backward makes it '53.

"The People of the Bear took many Crow scalps," said the Chief, proudly. "They say Mata-Tatonka's women made a trail rope of Crow hair. They say the People of the Bear braided Crow hair into the tails of their horses!"

"My brother is a great warrior," agreed

Spence. "In that year," he went on, "my young brother and his father were attacked by the Red People, the Cheyennes, who were led by a white man who hated all white people. The heart of this white man was very black. His heart was a snake's heart. His mother was of the Red People and he made many young men of her tribe foolish with lying words and mini-wakan, whiskey. He led the foolish young men into thieving and useless slaying. They called this man Two Fngers because his right hand was maimed. Two Fingers murdered my young brother's father, not as brave men fight, but as cowards fight. Does Mata-Tatonka know this man?"

"Mata-Tatonka does not know him," responded the Chief. "There has been much talk in the lodges of this man. They say he no longer rides with the Red People. They say that he went from the Red People in Star-Passed-With-a-Loud-Noise Winter. Some say he was heyoka and that the Thunderbird slew him. Mata-Tatonka does not know. He was a very bad man."

"The Chief says that the renegade left the Cheyennes about three years ago, the winter they saw a great falling star which exploded not far from their village; and that there are different stories about him, some saying he was 'heyoka,' crazy; some that he was killed by lightning, others that he just dropped out of sight. That's about all I've been able to pick up anywhere. Seems to be no trail."

"That devil is alive and somewhere in this country," Davy said to Spence after they had left the lodge of the Chief. "Some day we'll cut his trail. When that time comes—"

"Your father was a good man," said Spence. "His bones must be covered."

Davy fell easily into the life of his friend whom he looked upon as a wise, dependable older brother. Spence was hunting and trapping in the Powder River country, adding to his store of pelts by trading with Mata-Tatonka's people. He taught Davy the lore of the country in the many months that passed, as they slowly worked northward toward the Yellowstone. The friendship of Mata-Tatonka opened all lodges to them. Davy came to have a more complete understanding of the Indians than is acquired by most white men, for he lived their life and to some degree fell into their ways of thinking. He hunted with them and played their games and once, against Spence's advice, accompanied a small band of young dare-devils yearning for glory on a horse-stealing raid against the cleverest of all horse thieves, the Crows. It was a successful foray, to be chronicled in the Oglalla winter count as They-Took-Many-Horses-Winter. Davy returned something of a hero among the young braves and looked upon with growing respect by the elders of the tribe.

Mata-Tatonka calmly proffered his second daughter, Little Sun, to Davy one evening as they sat at meat in the Chief's lodge, and

seemed puzzled when Davy refused politely but emphatically. Little Sun was pretty enough as Indian girls went, though with a plumpness that presaged unbeautiful bulk within a few years. He told the Chief that he felt highly honored, but that his was a man's trail, a lone trail, a trail of vengeance. He could not take a wife because he must go out alone, before many moons, to see his father's slayer. That was an explanation perfectly comprehensible to Mata-Tatonka and the matter dropped there, although Little Sun, who had made eyes at Davy many times in her father's lodge, was mournful.

"You did well," said Spence. "White men who tie up with Injun women are fools. It usually leads to bad trouble and they have to feed a passel of their wife's relatives. The girl's kind o' purty, though."

"I don't care for girls, white or red," said Davy, blushing like a girl himself. "They used to make a lot of fun of me in Sacramento because I never had a sweetheart. I like them well enough, Silent, but oh, I don't know. I have never seen any one of them that I wanted to pair off with."

They left the Oglalla tribe one spring and worked westward to the enchanted land of the Yellowstone. Spence had been there years before with Bridger, but to Davy it was a region of marvels with its springs of boiling water, its leaping fountains and its giant trees. Eventually, they turned south toward Fort Laramie

where there was news that made Davy's heart leap, news of the railroad. Davy had been so long in the wilderness that no hint of the truth had reached him. Now he learned that the road was building, coming fast; that its eastern part had reached North Platte on the Platte River in Nebraska, and that the western part had forged ahead in California to the slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Eagerly he told Spence that he would start at once for North Platte.

"I've just got to go," he said. "Something calls me. I've felt it stronger and stronger the last year. It's strange and I can't explain it to myself, but it's there."

"Better wait until a wagon train passes goin' East," said Spence. "The news here is that the Cheyennes and Sioux are on the warpath against this railroad of yours. Talk is that there'll be fightin' every mile of the way. The Injuns are wild with fear and hate. Mata-Tatonka's Oglallas were our friends by a happen so. 'Twon't be the same down on the plains. I can't leave here yet awhile."

"No," said Davy, stubbornly, "I'm going. I've got to risk it. Mata-Tatonka's young men have taught me a few tricks. Besides, Star can outrun any Indian pony that ever bucked. Come along when you can, Silent. You'll find me a railroad man, pounding spikes, maybe."

"That's a hell of an ambition," said Spence.

The next day Major Anson, commanding the post, sent for Davy.

"I hear you are riding to the Platte," he said. "If you are bent on going you can be of great service to the army. I have dispatches I would like to get to Kearney but there's no scout here I can trust, or who wants to make the trip. How about it?"

"I'm your man," said Davy. "Have 'em ready at sunup, Major, for I sure am hitting the trail."

CHAPTER VIII

MISS MARSH OF NEW YORK

The flying years had swept the little group of Davy Brandon's friends "back East" into paths undreamed of in the old Springfield days. No other decade in the country's history ever marched so tempestuously over the lives and fortunes of a whole people. Stormy events thundered in the ears of men and blazed before their eyes. The false tranquillity of the fifties had been shattered by the cannon in Charleston Harbor. The land quivered to the shock of battle as reeling armies of Blue and Gray hurled themselves into combat, for the truth, as each saw it. It was an era of stunning change. The names of new leaders glowed like stars in the firmament of fame.

Brightest of all was the star of Lincoln. Other statesmen had groped blindly in the swift confusion of the looming crisis, but the humble railsplitter, seeing clearly, had won the affection and trust of the plain people. They made him President seven years after he said farewell to the Brandons. To his greatness of soul they had turned for salvation in the darkest hour that ever clouded a nation's hopes.

Like Lincoln, Thomas Marsh had been carried from Springfield upon the tide of events.

There, as contractor and builder, he had got on rapidly, but with the outbreak of the Civil War immensely wider opportunities presented themselves to his shrewd business judgment. The forces of the North had to be fed and clothed. Vast stores must be assembled and distributed to the armies in the field. Too elderly for active service, and altogether lacking in such military training and science as would have qualified him for important command, Marsh threw himself into the task for which he was fitted. At the beginning of the war he had called upon the President at the White House and talked the matter over.

"Tom," said Mr. Lincoln, "we've got plenty of good men at the front, but between you and me, there are a lot of infernal rascals back of the lines. The Union needs honest men. I wish you would take hold of the army contracts job from bacon to beans. If you want a pair of shoulder straps, I'll make you a Colonel to-morrow."

"No," said Marsh, "I don't want rank. I want a chance to do business in a square way."

"That you'll have," replied President Lincoln. "I'll write to Stanton to-night. I can get him to do things for me, once in a while. That will get you enough contracts to keep you busy for a year, I reckon. And, Tom, maybe you can feed those men of McClellan's something that will start them toward Richmond."

"I'll do my best, Mr. President. By the way, before I go, I want to give you Miriam's love

and respects. She's at school in New York. I placed her there last year. She especially asked me to tell you that she still has the medal you gave her the day Dave Brandon and his boy started West."

"Why, bless her heart!" said Mr. Lincoln, "she must be—what? All of sixteen, by this time. Quite a young lady, Tom. The next time you come to Washington you must bring her to the White House. What ever became of Brandon and the boy? Have you had any news of them?"

"Not a word," replied Marsh. "I wrote to correspondents in California to see if they could be traced, but nothing ever came of it. They simply dropped out of sight. The far West is a long way from us. It doesn't seem as if even this awful war interested those people very keenly."

"I know that, Tom," said the President thoughtfully. "The time has come, I am convinced, to bring East and West closer together. The railroad must be built, Tom, the railroad that Dave Brandon used to dream about, poor fellow! I have managed to find time between generals to talk over the project with men who are interested. A Mr. Huntington of San Francisco has been to see me a number of times, and I have gone over the ground with Mr. Durant of New York. I don't mind telling you, confidentially, that a bill will be introduced in Congress early next year to provide for the building of the Pacific Railroad. The men I

have talked to are enthusiastic about it. We must build it to hold California and the Pacific Coast states to the Union. It's the only thing which can open up the West."

"I believe now that it must come," said Marsh, "but the cost, the terrible difficulties?"

"They will be met and faced," replied Mr. Lincoln, quietly. "When the American people find that something is necessary for their happiness and security, money doesn't count, Tom, nor do difficulties exist. The road will be built. I want you to know this because you should have a hand in the building of it. They will need honest men for that job, for the road must be built right, Tom."

A full year had passed since that talk with the President, a year crowded with labor for Thomas Marsh. From his office in New York, and with weekly visits to Washington, he swung briskly into the business of supplying the armies in the field. It was profitable and Marsh quickly won repute for square dealing. Even the harassed and crusty Mr. Stanton received Tom Marsh at the War Department with friendly smiles and warm handshakes.

In New York he had made a home for Miriam and himself in one of a row of attractive houses set back from the south side of Eleventh Street, a little west of Sixth Avenue, and within a short walk of beautiful Washington Square. In this quiet quarter, shaded by fine old trees, he found himself very content, absorbed in his work, happy in the companionship of his

daughter. He was often absent from home, and much of Miriam's time was spent in her studies as a pupil of Miss Beekman's select Seminary for Young Ladies in Great Jones Street, but they had each other at week-ends and on such evenings as Marsh could spend in the metropolis. They took long walks together, along the East River and the North, enjoying the colorful confusion of the waterfronts; or drove their brougham and sleek chestnuts up Fifth Avenue, thronged with the carriages of the rich and fashionable shoppers.

He regretted that he could not find more time to devote to this lovely little daughter whose beauty, unfolding like a rose in June, was obvious even to a father's accustomed eyes. At seventeen Miriam was as charming a picture as one might hope to look upon. To Marsh she was like a light in a dark room. Her slight and graceful figure was rapidly taking on the curves of womanhood. Her hair, so long that it swept almost to her knees when she loosed it, was of a wonderful blue-blackness, and as fine as spun silk. Great, dark eyes which at times seemed purplish gray and at other times deep blue; glorious eyes, veiled by long, curving lashes, were perhaps her most arresting feature. A low, broad forehead, a short, straight nose, with a tantalizing tilt; full, curving lip with a delicious upward curve at the corners; a perfectly modeled chin, softly hinting at strength of character, and a complexion like sweet peas in the dewy morning,

had been conferred upon this delicious girl by a destiny careless of the heart pangs of helpless young men.

As cheerful as sunshine and with a disposition which owed, it may be, no little to perfect health, Miriam was yet no spiritless young beauty. She possessed a temper which sometimes flashed like lightning, as some of the supercilious misses of Miss Beekman's select finishing school discovered when she first arrived among them from the West and was submitted to the snubs and injustices they elected to inflict upon "the barbarian from the backwoods." Her mind worked like a steel trap, snapping painfully upon her tormentors. Her pluck, independence, readiness to shoulder her own problems, plus the quickly-made discovery that she was no tale-bearer, soon changed the atmosphere of the school from standoffishness and hostility to comradeliness and friendship, and at the end of her second term there was no more popular girl in the seminary. She made warm and enduring friends among girls of the highest social position in the city, and her sweetness and sure poise of good breeding made her extremely well-liked by the discerning mothers of her school friends. The result was that Miriam came to be a welcome guest in the old homes around Washington Square and in Lower Fifth Avenue, and her lovely face was invariably to be seen at the small dances and the more formal assemblies of smart society.

Young as she was, suitors swarmed to her as bees to a rose, and among the young men who constituted themselves her devoted cavaliers were several that bore names as old as Manhattan Island. The silver tray in the hallway of the picturesque house in West Eleventh Street, a house of three stories, with broad verandas of iron grill work facing each story and overlooking the neat and narrow lawn, displayed the cards of scions of the Stuyvesants, the Van Renssalaers, the Beekmans and the Van Courtlandts. It also held the neat visiting card of Mr. Peter Jesson, whose family had played its part in the history of old New York. Young Jesson had been introduced to her the previous winter by her best friend, Susan Delancey.

"Nice, but wild," whispered Susan. "Take him and tame him, Miriam."

Jesson had paid her earnest and assiduous attention from their very first meeting. Wherever Miriam appeared there Peter Jesson was sure to be. Little by little, imperiously, he had managed to shoulder aside all rivals.

In the year that had passed, Miriam was disturbingly conscious of a growing interest in Jesson. He attracted her, at times fascinated her. He was the perfect courtier, delicately skillful in the thousand small attentions that are the due of every pretty girl. Miriam gradually found herself depending upon him for the innumerable little services that girls like to have without solicitation. He was ex-

tremely personable—tall, athletically built, with the bearing of an aristocrat; distinguished in any company. He talked well and amusingly from an unfailing store of bright, light gossip of the town. She liked his clothes, very smartly selected, and worn with an air. Altogether, Mr. Peter Jesson had made distinct progress toward a definite place in the heart of Thomas Marsh's charming daughter. But, attracted as she was, Miriam was sometimes repelled. There was an arrogance about the man, an occasional disregard of the rights and feelings of others, especially of inferiors, that Miriam did not like.

This was the situation as the summer of the second year of the war approached. Marsh went frequently to Washington. He had had further conferences with the President, and his mind was becoming more and more engrossed with the much-talked-of project of the transcontinental railroad. He spoke of it to Miriam often.

"The bill authorizing the Pacific Railroad is in Congress. It will be reported out of committee sometime late in June," he said. "I believe it will be passed and I am confident that the President will sign it. Many people don't think so. They argue that every dollar of money and every ounce of energy should be used for the war, and that the railroad should be put off until victory is won. The crisis will come in a few days. I must be in Washington when it occurs."

Miriam discussed the railroad with Jesson. To her surprise he was intensely interested.

"As you know," he said, "I am a civil engineer, although I confess I have rather neglected my profession. It has been very difficult for one situated as I am to make the right sort of connection. I'm afraid I've been pretty much of an idler, but if this railroad is begun it might mean a wonderful opportunity for me. Your father being interested makes the idea all the more attractive to me. If he goes into it, the work will take him West. Miriam! That means that you would go with him, doesn't it?"

"Why, yes, Peter," said Miriam. "Of course. I couldn't dream of living anywhere without father. And father thinks the road will surely be built and will bring riches to the builders."

"Well, then, I see that I shall have to get down to work," laughed the young man. "I could not bear to have you go away from me. And the family fortunes certainly need reviving."

They were sitting in the drawing-room of the Marsh home. Jesson arose, walked to the long French window and gazed for a few moments toward the shadowy trees. He turned and walked slowly back to Miriam's chair, standing over her, bending forward.

"Miriam," he began, "I didn't mean to speak so soon. But, somehow, I must. I love you. You must know that I have adored you

since the night we met. I am afraid I haven't a great deal to offer you except a good family name. But I—I must have you. Tell me, do you care for me? Will you marry me?"

"Peter," said Miriam, steadily, though a little tremulously, "I am not going to be silly enough to say that this is a great surprise. I have known perfectly well that you seemed to be very fond of me—"

"Seemed!" cried Jesson, but Miriam continued—

—"I don't know whether I truly care for you in that way or not, the way people call love. I am very fond of you, Peter. I miss you when you are not near me."

"Miriam!" he cried. "You do love me!"

He caught her to him, but she pushed him away.

"No, not yet," she said gently. "There are things about you, Peter, things that I have heard. They trouble me. You seem to have no purpose in life. You gamble, or so the talk goes. I think you drink too much. You see, I speak frankly. I must. I am not a blue-stocking, Peter, but these stories—. Then, sometimes, you seem hard."

"Miriam, I have made enemies. I know that. They have lied about me from one end of New York to the other. Don't believe these stories. I suppose I've gone the pace some—a man has to, in my set—but if you will marry me I'll never touch another card. I'll be more

temperate. I'll go back to my profession. I'll make you proud of me."

He dropped to his knee, beseeching her with his eyes.

"Give me my chance, Miriam. I'm wild for you. I'll wait if you say so, wait for years, but I want your promise. Tell me you will marry me!"

Miriam gazed at him steadily for a long time. Finally she spoke. "I will give you your chance," she said. "I will marry you—"

He leaped to his feet.

"—not now, not soon, even; for I am too young. I know that, and father would never consent; but later, in a year or two, perhaps, after you have proved yourself and I am surer of myself as well. Will that content you?"

For a long time he pleaded, but under Miriam's gentleness was the steel of an inflexible resolution that Jesson could not bend. At the end he accepted her terms.

"Do you know where I am going when I leave you?" he asked. "I am going to see Durant."

"Mr. Durant of the new Union Pacific Railroad Company?" asked Miriam, who had frequently heard her father mention the New York capitalist as one of the prime movers in the railroad project.

"The very man," replied Jesson. "I know him well. My father and he were friends. I will ask him to find me a post."

When they parted she permitted him to kiss her, but the kiss did not fire her heart. It did not thrill her as she had supposed a girl must be thrilled by the touch of her lover's lips.

"And yet I am fond of him—like him better than any man I have ever met," she said to herself. It was a very thoughtful Miriam who prepared for bed that night.

CHAPTER IX

ABRAHAM LINCOLN DECIDES

THREE days later she received a letter from her father in Washington.

"The President is to see me on the morning of July 1st," Marsh wrote. "The Pacific Railroad Charter, as passed by Congress, is now on his desk. I have an idea that's what he wants to talk about. The bill aroused bitter opposition from people who think the Government should concentrate on winning the war, but I think I know how Lincoln feels.

"The times are very dark. The President is greatly changed, aged, haggard, bowed with care. McClellan has failed him, I am afraid. Public credit is at a low ebb. The country is full of compromisers and Southern sympathizers. Even the Government departments are honeycombed with disloyalty. But he is wonderful, our old friend, so patient and resolute, so cheerful under the terrible burden. He feels the pain of every wound inflicted on the fields of battle, the anguish of every wife and mother. Yet there are detractors in plenty who sneer at him as a light-minded trifler telling rustic stories and crude jokes while the blood of the people flows in streams. They

can't understand him here in Washington. They don't know him as we do. But the day will come when they will fully comprehend Abe Lincoln's goodness and grandness.

"I didn't intend to write so fully, but I know how much you are interested. I suggest that you join me at the Willard on the last day of June; then you can go with me next day to keep the appointment with the President. He has often asked about 'little Miriam.' I am eager to see his face when he sees what a young lady you have become."

She read the letter to Jesson, thrilling at the portrait Marsh sketched of the lonely man in the White House. Jesson's light eyes betrayed interest.

"Mr. Marsh seems sure that the President will sign the bill," he said. "In that event the work should begin soon. They will need engineers. I would be delighted and honored, Miriam, if you would permit me to escort you to Washington and your father. I missed Durant here, but I could see him there and perhaps I could enlist Mr. Marsh's interest. Your father seems to be very close to our remarkable President."

"I'd love to have you go with me, Peter," said Miriam. "I want to tell father how interested you are in the railroad and how much you'd like to be a part of it. He'll probably ask you to go to the White House with us. It will be wonderful if we can see the President and talk to him."

"To be with you is wonderful enough, my darling," said Jesson, ardently. "I'm not sure, though, that I am exactly thrilled over the prospect of meeting the queer person whom luck has put in the White House. Many of my friends have talked to him and they have a very unfavorable impression of the man—he is far from being a gentleman. I'm told he is a clodhopper, with a vulgar strain. Not at all the person one could ask to his home."

Miriam flushed. Quick anger stabbed her. Rising temper prompted her to rebuke this supercilious young aristocrat in a fashion to be remembered, but she knew the opinion held of the President by the cultured of the East, by people "who can't understand him," as her father put it. She bridled her anger and spoke quietly.

"You and your friends will change your opinion, some day," she said, "just as the great statesmen in the Cabinet have had to change theirs. Mr. Stanton told father that he detested the President at first, couldn't bear to speak to him. Now he is the President's most devoted supporter. The Secretary of State, Mr. Seward, thought he could put Mr. Lincoln in his place, but Mr. Seward quickly found out who was master. Every man in the Cabinet knows that the President is his superior in intellect, Peter. He may begin Cabinet meetings with a reading from Artemus Ward or with some country joke, but just the same he always finds the solution of problems that

baffle the others, great statesmen though they are."

"You may be right, dear," said Jesson, lightly. "I suppose it's the prerogative of genius to dress like a scarecrow and talk like a farm laborer. If he puts the railroad through and gives us a chance to get rich, why I, too, will sing the praises of our peasant king!"

Miriam bit her lip over the persistent sneer, but turned the conversation to their forthcoming journey.

A day or two later they arrived in Washington. Marsh had met Jesson frequently, and neither liked nor disliked him. Miriam told her father as they drove to the Willard that she had accepted Jesson's proposal of marriage and that they had agreed upon a long engagement. Marsh looked serious.

"We will talk about it at supper," he said. "I shall be busy all day with the railroad promoters. We are all pretty much on edge. Amuse yourselves as best you can."

"I must see Mr. Durant," said Jesson, and explained his ambition. Marsh nodded, not unpleased.

"We shall meet then, at supper," he said, as he shook hands with the young man and showed Miriam to their rooms.

That evening as they dined leisurely, waited upon by an old darkey whose manner was the perfection of solicitous service, Marsh spoke his mind.

"Mr. Jesson," he said, "my great object in life is to ensure the happiness of this child, for she is only a child to me. It is for her that I work and plan, for her that I am trying to build a fortune. If Miriam loves you and wants you for a husband, I shall not stand in the way. But if you want her you must wait for her. She is too young to marry. It will take two or three years to finish her education. Moreover, the times are dark. None of us knows what the outcome of our hopes and ambitions may be. Half of my little fortune is locked up in Government bonds. It may be years before they rise to full value. The rest of my capital I intend to put into stock of the railroad. If the road fails I shall be not much better than a pauper and will have to start all over again. If the road succeeds I hope to be a very rich man."

Jesson's mind worked in lightning flashes as Marsh talked. He had supposed that Miriam's father was already rich. Such had been the impression in New York. Now it developed that Marsh was not the possessor of a stable, independent fortune such as would make Miriam an heiress worth while. The girl was lovely, adorable, delicious; but could he afford to commit himself irrevocably to a doubtful hazard? He wanted her. She fired his blood. But could Peter Jesson treat himself to the luxury of a penniless wife, however beautiful?

"Mr. Marsh," said Peter Jesson, his mind

made up, "in my love for Miriam there is no thought of money. I intend to make my own way. I understand and sympathize with your feelings. If you think best, we will wait, as long as may be necessary, always deferring to your judgment."

The little speech pleased Marsh. Shrewd as he was in business matters, he was not versed in the subtleties of such minds as Jesson's. It appeared to him that Jesson had accepted the situation in manly style. His estimate of the young man went up. Miriam was conscious of a vague disappointment in her lover. The surface of his words was sensible, prudent, matching her own belief as to the wisdom of a long engagement, but somehow she would have preferred a more impetuous suitor, one whose ardor was less tolerant of delay. She was quite sure she did not want to marry in haste, but she was equally sure—and the contradiction vexed her—that she wanted Jesson to urge it. She sat silent, thoughtful, while her father and lover talked about the railroad. Jesson had met Mr. Durant in the afternoon and had obtained the partial promise of an engineering post with the Union Pacific.

"I am glad that you enlisted his interest," said Marsh, "but as a matter of fact, you may not require it. I am to be general superintendent. I shall need my own staff of engineers. There is no reason why you shouldn't have your chance with me."

Jesson thanked him warmly and the conver-

sation shifted to other topics, particularly the news from the front, or lack of news, for there was great disquiet in the capital, with few bulletins to cheer an apprehensive people.

At ten the next morning they appeared at the White House and were ushered by the major-domo into the reception room for those who had appointments with the President or with Mr. Hay, his secretary, or whose importance was such that they were admitted without question to await their turn. To Miriam the scene in the anteroom was animated and exciting. The long, low chamber was thronged with men who were making history. Her father identified many of these—famous senators, State Governors, distinguished soldiers.

"There is General McClellan, up for a hurried visit from the front," he said, indicating a stiffly erect figure of middle height. Miriam noted the much-talked-of general carefully. She thought he seemed very intelligent but self-willed. His face showed signs of irritation as he responded occasionally to members of a group of officers around him.

"The General feels as if he ought to be allowed to walk right in," said Marsh. "He doesn't like to be kept waiting."

Officers and civilians were arriving constantly. There was an incessant stir and murmur of conversation. Several gentlemen detached themselves from a group and bowed to her father. He presented them: "Mr. Collis P. Huntington, of San Francisco, Vice-Presi-

dent of the new Central Pacific Company" "Mr. Judah P. Benjamin, engineer of the Central Pacific"; "Mr. Thomas C. Durant, Vice-President of the Union Pacific." Miriam saw that Huntington and Benjamin were obviously men of the West, plainly dressed, very direct in speech, and that Durant was of quite another type, very fashionably garbed, courtier-like in manner, cultivated in speech. These gentlemen withdrew to one side to discuss the railroad with her father. It was plain from their manner and faces that they were at high tension, worried, nerve-strained.

Miriam's attention and quick sympathies were caught by a woman who had just been shown into the anteroom, a woman old and bent, pathetically shabby. She had heard the usher's low-pitched voice:

"I'll do the best I can, madam. I'll send in your name to the President. I cannot say whether he will see you or not. There are so many with appointments."

Miriam's warm heart tightened as she saw tears well in the dim eyes of the old woman, and saw her thin, toil-worn hands tremble as she dabbed a handkerchief at wet eyes. Impulsively, the girl went over to the chair and put her hand lightly upon the arm of the sadly troubled figure in dingy black.

"If there is anything I can do," she began, gently. "My father and the President are good friends. Perhaps we can say a word for you."

A thin and shaking hand clutched at her own.

"Just a word with the President," she said. "Only a word. That is all I want. It's for my boy. They're going to shoot him. He was found asleep on duty. He's only a boy, Miss, no older than you are—my only boy, all I have in the world!"

Miriam patted her shoulder comfortingly. All at once the buzz of talk ceased. Silence fell upon the crowded room. Miriam's gaze turned to a door which led from the private apartments. Secretary Hay, walking briskly, entered the anteroom, preceding a figure that followed slowly. It was the President. As he approached, his head was bent, his arms were held behind him, fingers interlaced. Eagerly the girl studied this man she had known so well in the old days of her childhood in Springfield, and her heart leaped out to him in love and sympathy. He was changed, indeed, from the Lincoln that she knew. Like a great forest tree, the giant figure was bent by the storms that could not break it. His face was haggard, as her father had said, yet glowed with sweetness. It was a face which expressed such dignity and power, such melancholy and sadness, such charm and human sympathy as Miriam had never before seen written upon a human countenance.

Every eye in the room was turned upon him, yet he seemed scarcely conscious of the centered gaze. He came forward, bowing to the right, and left, with the appealing awkward-

ness that Miriam so well recalled and which made tears spring to her eyes. Suddenly he observed the weeping old woman in the chair at Miriam's side. He stopped instantly.

"What is it, madam?" he asked in his deep, gentle voice. "What is your trouble? Tell me. Perhaps your President can help you."

She sobbed uncontrollably. The whole room was listening. Miriam patted her shoulder again, urging her to speak. Almost at once the poor old soul gripped her sorrow and held it. She got to her feet, bobbing a queer, old-fashioned curtsey. Words tumbled from her quivering lips.

"It's my son, Mr. President. My son, Tom Howard. As good a boy as ever lived, and they're going to shoot him for being asleep on post. Oh, my God, Mr. President, don't let them. Save him for his mother. He was all tired out. He would have died rather than go to sleep if he could have prevented it—"

The President took her seamed, brown hand. Over his face spread a beautiful light—soul sunshine, Miriam thought. He motioned to John Hay.

"Your son will not be shot," he said, decisively. "It would be impossible for such a mother to have a bad son. Dry your tears. Go home. Your troubles are over."

"Get all the facts, John, at once, now. Prepare a memorandum to Secretary Stanton. Good-by, madam. God keep you."

He passed on. A company of officers of high

rank bowed, arresting his progress. General Fortesque spoke.

"If you will permit me, sir. We are all deeply concerned over the report that you will sign the Pacific Railroad Act. It is a piece of engineering folly. Every dollar is needed to conduct the war. Surely, Mr. President, you will not give this bill your approval?"

Mr. Lincoln stood gazing at the floor. Presently he spoke, every ear straining to catch his words:

"Gentlemen, we must not let the problems of the war blind us to the greater problems of the peace to come." He paused, gazing full at the intent group, then resumed:

"Otherwise we will have fought in vain!"

He was about to enter the Executive Office when he noticed Marsh and beckoned to him, his face lighting up with the joy it always expressed at the sight of a friend.

"I shall send for you in a few minutes, Tom," he whispered.

"Mr. President, Miriam is here. Have you a moment? She is so anxious to speak to you."

Miriam came forward quickly, Jesson following slowly, eyebrows slightly raised.

"Oh, Mr. President!" she cried, her musical voice ringing with delight. "Don't you remember me—Miriam Marsh?"

"Why, of course," he said, giving her his great hand. "But what a fine lady our little Miriam has grown to be. Ah! That reminds

me, and little Davy! Now, that was a boy worth your waiting for!"

Miriam's face fell. Then her eyes twinkled as she noted Jesson's annoyance. Quickly she presented him:

"This is Mr. Jesson. He's to be father's engineer and we're engaged to be married."

"So, so," said Mr. Lincoln, "this is news, indeed. And how do you think you will like that rough life out there on the plains, Mr. Jesson?"

"I daresay I 'shall manage," replied Mr. Peter Jesson. He could not refrain from showing his contempt for this railsplitter in the White House. Mr. Lincoln observed him shrewdly, reading him like a printed page, intensely amused at the type.

"I will take my chance with the Indians and the hard work," continued Jesson. "It's the dirt and grime and vermin I detest. I hear that a man is fairly eaten out of his clothes."

"Well, Mr. Jesson, if that happens to you," said the President, his eyes twinkling, but his face perfectly serious, "there'll be a mighty good suit of clothes left for somebody!"

He pressed Miriam's hand and walked into his office. Marsh was summoned presently. The President sat at his desk, the Pacific Railroad Act spread before him.

"Tom," he said at once, "I have decided."

He bent to the document and wrote his name at the bottom of the last page. Marsh watched him in such elation as he had never felt before.

A William Fox Production *The Iron Horse*

"DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME, MR. PRESIDENT?

"I wanted you to be here when I signed the bill," continued Mr. Lincoln. "I wish poor Dave Brandon could have been here. What it would have meant to him! Tom, if you do go out there, try to find Dave and his boy. Now about the railroad. I have done all that I can do. It is up to the builders and the country. I am afraid it will move slowly, but at least the way is open. I tell you, Tom, it will bring a miracle to the West. Within half a century, with this road and the roads that will spring from it, there will be fifty million people living happily between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean. It will mean a great, prosperous, united country. Your work is waiting for you, Tom, and I wish you the best of success. Come to me any time you are in difficulties and we will see what can be done."

CHAPTER X

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

The Marshes and Peter Jesson returned to New York a few days after Mr. Lincoln had made the railroad act the law of the land. Miriam looked for immediate activity, expecting two mighty armies of builders to spring East and West, to the titanic task of laying the rails. When nothing happened, and there was only occasional mention of the railroad in her pet newspaper, Mr. Dana's New York *Sun,* she couldn't understand the strange delay.

Marsh, preoccupied and worried, tried to explain.

"We have the charter," he said, "but it begins to look as if it is only a deed to a rainbow. Those who have money feel the risk is too great. You see, dear, the Government isn't advancing any cash. Much as it wants the road, the war comes first and the treasury is pretty well drained.

"Uncle Sam has pledged his credit. For every mile of road built he will turn over to the two private companies in long-time loans, bonds of so many thousand dollars a mile, $16,000 up to $48,000, depending upon the difficulties and cost of track laying, and will give public land bonuses for every mile completed.

But to get Government bonds which can be converted into cash and to get the land grants we must first build road. We need money to build road, but we've got to build road to get money."

"That sounds like a riddle, father," smiled Miriam.

"It's a riddle that's whitening my hair. We have combed Wall Street, begging for help. Poor Huntington is almost distracted. He and his partners out in California, Stanford, Crocker and Hopkins, are mortgaged for every dollar they own. Out of their own pockets they have started track toward the Sierra. Even they don't know how far they can go. Half California is laughing at them. The other half is yelling fraud. 'The Dutch Flat Swindle,' the papers call it. Still, it's easier for them to get started. The war is hardly more than an echo to the Far West. Here in the East the war paralyzes enterprise. Capital sits back, waiting. The big men downtown, men like D. O. Mills, say it is too much of a gamble. They think the project of building 1,800 miles of railroad over treeless plain and waterless desert, through hostile Indian country, and over mountains is foredoomed. They ask where business is to come from in an unsettled wilderness."

"You won't give up?" asked Miriam.

"No, I shall stick it out. We'll keep knocking at the door of the plutocrats. Maybe a miracle will happen."

But it was destiny, not a miracle, which was to give living impetus to the Iron Horse. Destiny, having decided that the American Union was to stand, unbroken, one and indivisible, stretched forth a great hand, swept back from shell-harrowed fields the gallant forces of the Confederacy and upon the clearing sky wrote "Appomattox." With the end of the war, men's thoughts turned eagerly to projects of peace and nation building, and from one end of the land to the other arose the demand that the Pacific Railroad be started in earnest.

In April, 1865, came the tragedy which stunned the nation, casting the Marshes into deepest sorrow, the assassination of Lincoln. Marsh and his daughter went immediately to Washington and were a part of the funeral party that accompanied the President's body to the old home in Springfield. Miriam learned then how the people mourn such leaders as arise only two or three times in a century to win their love and faith. They hastened back to New York, Marsh called by grave affairs.

The three years that had drifted by since the signing of the act by Mr. Lincoln had been years of intense activity. With his eastern associates, Marsh had worked desperately to raise funds, but until late in 1864 it had been a hopeless effort. Congress had come to the help of the railroad promoters with a new Act which gave the railroad companies the right to issue their own bonds, the Government's bond loan becoming a second mortgage. This began

to attract capital. By that time it was plain that the South was beaten. The money kings opened their strongboxes.

Then came months of planning, recruiting and organization. Marsh made a visit to California, taking Miriam with him. He went to study what had been accomplished by his friend, Huntington, and Huntington's partners, the indomitable four. Nature had done its best to impede them by thrusting valleys and mountains across the right of way, but they had striven ahead mile after mile, blasting through the mountains, filling the valleys with stone. Marsh visited Charles Crocker at the Central Pacific end of track, where the burly Crocker bellowed up and down the line like a mad bull.

"I'd sell my whole interest in the damned road for a clean shirt," he barked at Marsh one day. "But nobody in California owns a clean shirt to trade with. Here we've built less than sixty miles in three years, most of it on bluff. You play poker, Marsh? Well, you know what it is to sit in a tablestakes game and go after the biggest pot you ever saw with a busted flush. Labor? Independent as a hog on ice! And scarce. Crazy about gold digging and too damned haughty to swing a pick! An intelligent Government holds us down to American iron, strictly. Result is that every rail we lay has to be brought clear from New York, 19,000 miles, all the way round the Horn. We've got twenty ships on the ocean this day!

We're ballasting this track with gold, but we're going ahead. I've figured out a way to build over the Sierra and on east so fast your heads 'll swim."

"How's that?" asked Marsh.

"John Chinaman," said Crocker, with his great laugh. "I'll show 'em! I have been trying out Chinese as road laborers and they're good stuff. Hard working, sober, peaceable. Next spring I'll have big gangs of 'em hard at it, and I'll keep putting them on if I have to kidnap half the Yellow Kingdom."

"A steam-engine in boots," Marsh said to his daughter, next day, describing Crocker. "Those men have worked a miracle on their own resources. Now that bonds are selling they will make rapid strides. Huntington wants Congress to let the Central build until it meets the Union Pacific. If that happens, we in the East will have to work fast to reach Utah ahead of those hustling Californians. Crocker will have a string of pig-tailed track layers all the way from the Sierra Nevada to Brigham Young's temple."

They returned East along the Salt Lake trail, by stage coach to Kearney and Omaha, then down the Missouri to St. Louis by steamboat, and on to New York by rail. The West thrilled Miriam. The free swing of it got into her blood. Her imagination pictured the frontier —buffalo, Indians, all the old life—slowly retreating before the irresistible advance of a home-seeking people following their destiny.

She resolved to be with her father when the time came for him to take up his work on the plains.

Marriage was still in the distant future. It was impossible to think of leaving her father at this crisis. He would need her more than ever. When troubles and difficulties assailed him, she must be at his side to comfort and to encourage. Young as she was, she appreciated the magnitude of the task. She foresaw bitter hours for her father before the last rails were laid. She determined to stand by him with all of the courage and sympathy and cheerfulness she could bring to bear.

"Peter will have to wait," she thought. "There will be plenty of time for settling down."

Her mind drifted back over their engagement, now three years old. It had not seemed strange for them to go along so. Their mutual friends quite understood how it was, familiar with her father's point of view, accepting her own occasional explanation that she felt too young for the responsibilities of marriage. Nor had Jesson been difficult. From time to time he had asked her to set a day, but gave way gracefully when she put him off.

The truth was, Peter Jesson was not permitting his desire for Miriam to interfere with plans he had made for the comfortable future of Peter Jesson. His enthusiasm for the railroad had waned considerably in the years that followed his visit to the White House with

Miriam and her father that July day in 1862. He had begun to persuade himself that the road was a failure after all, and that his many friends who laughed at the project were wise. As much as he cared for Miriam—and that was a great deal, considering the cold and self-centered nature of the man—he was dominated by ambition, principally the ambition for wealth. Of his family estate, once great, only a fragment remained, with an income barely sufficient to maintain his place among the gilded set. Moreover, his debts troubled him. It was not moral qualms that harassed him, but fear of bankruptcy, social humiliation.

He had clung to the engagement with Miriam, half in love, but with a keen eye on the chance that the road might be put through. He felt certain its success would enrich Marsh as one of the pioneers and principal builders. He saw no opportunity so likely to lift him from circumstances both exasperating and dangerous. He visioned himself as a rich man's son-in-law—only son-in-law—a very important consideration. Yes, it was worth going on with, if only to keep other suitors at a distance.

He said to himself that he loved her, though there were times when she seemed too colorless—too good. Beautiful enough to fire any man's blood, provokingly feminine to her finger tips, her serene innocence sometimes got on Jesson's nerves. He felt that he had never been able to stir her, to bring to her great eyes the look that he wanted to see there. It irritated

him, stung his vanity, this utter failure to inspire in the girl the passion that often gripped him.

"I wish to God she had more fire," he thought. "She treats me more like a brother than a lover. Well, I know where to find the fire when I want it." He smiled as he thought of an extremely private little establishment just off Union Square, the expenses of which had no little to do with the debts that harassed him.

He had brushed up his mathematics, the theory of engineering, finding unexpected pleasure in the task. He had a good mind, with natural aptitude for engineering science. Marsh had told him he might be assigned to the field soon; that Mr. Durant and the other directors, with plenty of funds in sight, were about ready to start track laying; that grading had already begun.

"I have been needed here in organization work," said Marsh, "and do not expect to go into the field until early next year, but the time is coming rapidly. I shall see that you have your chance."

But time dragged once more, and it was not until the winter of 1866 that Marsh reported great news. He said to Miriam:

"We must go West at once, next week. I must take charge, as superintendent. General Dodge has sent for me. A tremendous drive is about to take place. Last year we built 260 miles, but we must speed up or those California

fellows will be running over us. Congress has forced our hand, freeing the Central Pacific from any mileage limit. It can build eastward until it meets our road."

"Why does that make such a difference?" asked Miriam.

"It will be a race!" said Marsh. "The greatest race the world ever saw! Look at the prize! On the 1,700 miles from Omaha to Sacramento, the Government will issue about $55,000,000 in bonds. We are authorized to issue private bonds for an equal amount. The value of the public land bonuses will be scarcely less. Think of it! A race for $165,000,000! Bonds and public lands will be awarded as forty-mile sections of track are completed, a rich reward for every mile laid down. The more track each road can lay the greater will be its share of this golden harvest. There has never been anything like it in the history of the world.

"Our plans are made. Our treasury is running over. We are all ready to start. Expense is no object. Speed is the thing. We must drive the Union Pacific westward as fast as men can toil. We must cross Nevada and Utah before the Central Pacific can get well over the Sierra. We must lay five hundred miles of track next year."

Miriam plunged into preparations for the journey and for a long stay in the West. Her father had told her that as superintendent under the Chief Engineer, General Grenville M. Dodge, he would make his home upon the

advancing road. A private car had been built for him by a Mr. Pullman, whose little factory in Chicago was beginning to turn out comfortable, even luxurious, homes on wheels. When Miriam calmly announced that she was going, Marsh instantly consented.

"With you, I shall have a real home," he said happily. "We will be quite comfortable. It is certain to be a wonderful experience for you, with little danger. General Sherman assures us the army will guard the rails every mile through the Indian country. Soldiers will be with us wherever we move."

They traveled westward at the end of July, Jesson, now regularly retained as engineer for Marsh, going with them. At St. Louis they were caught in the tide of a great human stream flowing up the Missouri to Omaha, hundreds of brawny men hastening to jobs on the advancing Union Pacific. Miriam observed that most of these men wore army uniforms; former Union soldiers, mixed with veterans who had followed the Stars and Bars.

"Practically all ex-soldiers," said her father. "Blue and Gray in another great adventure, but united this time, thank God! They get along well together, too. Real fighting men don't hate each other, Miriam, even when they happen to be on opposite sides. They gain respect for each other, just as these fellows have done. We couldn't have better material for the road. They're rough, but they're the stuff we can depend on. What's the matter, Jesson? You

don't seem to like the looks of our raw material."

"I can think of several objections to being chummy with this riffraff," said Jesson. "All of them look as if they needed a bath. A very pretty crew of hooligans. They act as if they thought they were quite as good as we are."

"I expect a bath wouldn't hurt any of them," laughed Marsh, "but maybe they got out of the habit of it in the army. Baths were none too regular, I've heard. As for manners, you must remember that they are a rough and ready lot, but good metal just the same. You notice how they act when Miriam is anywhere near them, caps off, respectful, quiet. As for thinking they're as good as we are, why, I expect they really think so. A lot of people in America take the Declaration seriously, the 'all men are created free and equal,' you know."

"You are too severe on the poor fellows," chided Miriam. "I think they're delightful. Take Mr. Casey and his friends over there. I've fallen quite in love with them, Peter. Pat Casey is a perfect circus!"

"Corporal Casey would fall over backward if he heard you call him 'Mister' Casey," said her father. "But Pat's an amusing rascal, he and his pals, Sergeant Slattery and Private Schultz. They were mighty fine soldiers and they will be mighty fine workmen for the road. I'm taking them with me, as part of my own organization, for the rush job farther west."

"I have already enlisted them as my personal

bodyguard," said Miriam. "They are my Three Musketeers, are Casey, Slattery and Schultz. I won't have a word said against them. Pat!" She trilled to the Corporal, at that moment entertaining a company in the bow of the boat. "Come here, please."

"There are times when I miss me wings," said Corporal Casey, as he doffed his old army cap.

Neither the blind nor the deaf could ever have been in doubt as to the motherland of Casey. He was thoroughly and impudently Hibernian from the bald head he uncovered to the large feet clad in army brogans. The inimitable Irish twinkle enlivened his quick brown eyes. Devilment sparkled in them. Intelligence and combativeness were written in his weather-beaten face; devotion too. Unshaven, clothed in a dingy, blue uniform that was not new in the last year of the war; with not a handful of silver dollars left to rattle in his pocket, the spirit of Corporal Patrick Parnell Casey soared high above his prospects. He faced the world with a wink and a laugh. He had an air, had Casey.

"Pat," said Miriam, "I have just been telling father and Mr. Jesson that I have adopted you. From now on you and Slattery and Schultz are my special bodyguard."

" 'Tis mesilf that's honored and delighted, Miss Miriam," said the Corporal. "Sure, an' it comes natural to the Caseys to be aguarrdin' queens! In the good old days, when there were

kings in Ireland and all the Caseys were earls and jukes, we always commanded the bodyguards."

"All right, Pat," Marsh laughed. "Report to me at Omaha with Slattery and Schultz and any others you O.K. I'll arrange for your transportation.

"Seriously," he added, as Pat turned from Miriam with a flourish and a salute, "it isn't a bad idea to have that wild Irishman and his pals on hand to look out for you. Not that you need a bodyguard, but they're good men to have around. You seem to have won their hearts."

"If I have, I am proud of it, father," said Miriam. "I think they're dears, Pat with his foolishness, Sergeant Slattery looking after Pat like a stern father, and old Schultzy with his quaint German ways."

CHAPTER XI

A SHINING RAPIER THRUSTS AT A SULLEN FRONTIER

Union Pacific Headquarters had moved on to North Platte when Marsh, after a final conference with General Dodge in Omaha, hastened westward in his new private car to quicken the great race for the winning of the West. Miriam was enraptured with the comfort and convenience of her rolling home, one of the first built by Pullman. Her room was small, but cheerful with its rose-silk draperies and bird's-eye maple, paneled, and charmingly painted in the light, French manner.

The car was attached to a long train of coaches crowded with two hundred picked men, most of them fighting Irish, with whom the new superintendent meant to speed up work. Over this lively crew, Miriam's musketeers quickly establised ascendancy, for a blow at one meant a combined attack from all three. Casey was a wildcat in a scrimmage, an Hibernian D'Artagnan, while big Slattery was a veritable Porthos. Schultz, time-seasoned and slower to anger, knew how to use his hard old fists, and was the tactician of the trio.

Miriam stared accusingly at Pat one morning as the train waited at Kearney for orders.

"Pat! where did you get that black eye?"

" 'Twas a prisint, Miss Miriam, from a frind of mine, a big harp named Doolan in Car 6."

"Did you whip him?"

" 'Tis a matter of puzzlemint to me," the Corporal explained; "yez see, when I kim to, Doolan had been carried off, and I'm not dead sure which wan of us was licked."

It was Schultz who gave her the truth of the Homeric battle. Pat, for once, had minimized his victory. Big Doolan of Car 6 was unlikely to suggest again that the Caseys were best known in Donegal for snipping cows' tails in the dark of the moon.

But there was little fighting among these young or middle-aged Irishmen, most of whom had been born on the Old Sod. Of merriment and rough fun there was a great deal, and light-hearted song by day and night. Miriam's musketeers and Dinny O'Brien, a strapping lad whom Casey had lately honored with his approval, made up a quartet whose voices quavered in the old "Com-all, ye's." As the train sped through the dusk, over the snow-covered prairie, the sheer melancholy of the ballads brought tears to the girl's eyes. Even in the jolliest of the songs there was a haunting undernote which plucked at her heartstrings. Their repertoire was inexhaustible from "The Exile of Erin" and "Soggarth Aroon," to "Doran's Ass" and "Ould Docther Mack."

"I like to hear them singing," said her father, at work over his maps with Jesson.

"It keeps them good-natured. Takes the place of red liquor with those big children."

"It makes an awful yowling when a man is trying to work out calculations," said Jesson snappishly.

The next morning, at breakfast, they rolled into North Platte, the strangest, most fascinating town that Miriam had ever seen. In less than two weeks, as if raised by the magic power of Solomon's djinns, a city of more than three thousand had sprung from the prairie sod, to play its brief and violent part in the swift-changing drama of the building race across the continent. It was a city of canvas tents and flimsy, wooden houses, with a fringe of shacks and sod dugouts. One long street divided it, every other house a saloon. Surging in the main street was a motley crowd,—railroad workmen, Mexicans, Indians, black-coated gamblers, swearing mule-whackers, soldiers, merchants, miners, pioneers, mixed with the shifty scum of all creation. There were many women in the throng, some young and pretty, some faded and hard-faced, all drifting with the railroad as it spurned a dying town and leaped ahead to raise a living one. Every few weeks, as the road raced forward, the town was packed upon a freight train and moved bodily westward to the new headquarters site. The train that bore this fantastic jumble of rowdies and adventurers, the tools of their trades, their eatables and drinkables, and the very roofs over their heads, had a name of its own, a name it

had earned in a dozen uproarious journeys—"Hell on Wheels."

Marsh delayed only to visit Union Pacific headquarters, one of the more pretentious shacks, and to meet his engineering and construction staff. Leaving Jesson there, he had an engine coupled to his car and went forward toward the end of track, half a dozen miles to the west. There Miriam had her first glimpse of the driving labor of track laying. First to catch her attention were the soldiers, half a company of regular infantrymen, guarding the workmen. Their Springfields were stacked in little pyramids along the graded way ahead of the oncoming rails. Sentinels constantly patrolled the right of way, alert for the first warning of raiders. In the distance she saw mounted men. Her father told her they were friendly Pawnees, scouts for the army, bitter foes of the hostile Sioux and Cheyennes, and used by the Government to protect the railroad forces.

"There's a big bunch of them," he said, "all under Major North of the Army. They are far ahead, or on the flanks, as the road advances, but you don't see them ordinarily as they range a long way off, scouting for hostiles. You'll see their smoke signals some day when they have news to report."

For half a mile along the grade gangs were working at high speed. Miriam's first impression was one of disorder and mad confusion, men running up and down the line, lifting burdens and dropping them, and stung to

greater exertion by the rasping orders of brass-lunged gang bosses. Then she caught the rhythm of the swift, smooth system of track laying. It thrilled her like the beating of drums. She saw the trackmen, two by two, carrying ties, and dropping them quickly but accurately-spaced upon the smooth, bare grade. A light car, drawn by a single, galloping horse, clattered down the track, bringing two rails. Before it could stop, two men seized the end of a rail, heaved it up and started forward, the rest of the gang taking hold in pairs, until the rail was clear of the car. The bearers went forward at a run, and at the bellow of the gang boss, dropped the rail upon the ties. On the other side of the car, with a second rail, the same game was played. Miriam timed the job and found that it took less than thirty seconds to swing a heavy rail from the car and run it forward to its exact place upon the cross-ties. Thirty seconds to a rail, four rails to a minute. Breathless work, but the men were driven by demons, fired by the spirit of the race. The moment the car was empty it was tipped over the side of the track to clear the way for the next load, then it was tipped back and sent flying to the rear.

At the heels of the first gang trod the gaugers, the spikers and the bolters. Sparks flew as they locked rails to ties. First the gaugers made the true adjustment, then the spikers and bolters went at it with swinging sledges in a grand anvil chorus that sent echoes clanging

over the prairie. They worked in triple time, three strokes to a spike, four hundred rails to a mile. Miriam did a little mental arithmetic and the sum startled her. Those sledges were to be swung forty million times before East and West were linked.

"They're working well," Marsh told her. "They have caught the spirit. They know it's a race. If we can keep them well fed and if the Indians hold off, we'll burn up the prairie. I have told Dodge that I will give him three or four miles a day, maybe five, when the best weather comes."

Visitors came to the car that evening after supper, among them General Jack Casement, the principal contractor, a little man all fire and steel, not much to look at, but a terror along the line. His blue eyes were as keen as the point of a Bowie knife and his voice snapped like a whip. Miriam liked the red-bearded General and could understand how he had won his war record and the fear of bullies.

But her eyes went mostly to a tall young man who stood straight as an Indian at her father's side. She thought him very handsome and gallant. He reminded her of one of the dashing Frenchmen of old romantic days, with his glossy black hair which fell to his shoulders, his mustache and imperial, as black as his hair, and his brilliant eagle eyes. Her father introduced this romantic figure.

"Miriam," he said, "this is Billy Cody of North Platte, one of the finest scouts in the

West. Mr. Cody is going to hunt buffalo for the road. We have made a contract and he has engaged to feed our men."

Cody, always quick to admire a pretty woman, bowed with graceful ease. Miriam was charmed with his manner. She sensed that she attracted him and it pleased her. Jesson saw it and could not prevent annoyance showing in his face. But Miriam was used to her fiancé's irritability over the attentions paid to her by other men, and lightly ignored it. Cody kept her enthralled for half an hour, telling her tales of the West—of Indians, of buffalo hunting and the pony express. He had once covered more than three hundred miles in twenty-four hours as a pony express rider through the Indian country, wearing out twenty horses, utterly without rest. He thought it was the record. He explained how he hunted buffalo, telling her of the movements of the great herds that shook the plains with their lumbering gallop.

"It's fear of losing the buffalo that has set the Indians against us more than anything else," he said. "They can see that the railroad will open the country to white men, and that towns and settlements will follow. To the Indians the buffalo is life itself, Miss Marsh. I have fought Indians ever since I was a boy. I have red enemies and red friends, so I can understand their side and sort of sympathize with them. But they are up against something too strong for their medicine. Only a few are in-

telligent enough to see that resistance is hopeless. So I suppose they will keep fighting until they're wiped out or all corralled into reservations."

"It does seem a tragedy," said Miriam.

"It's progress," said the scout.

General Jack was describing to Marsh his troubles with the rowdies and bad men who followed the road like birds of prey.

"They're the off-scourings of creation," snapped the peppery little man. "But I'll tame 'em! We've got a nice little graveyard going already in North Platte. Last week Dodge sent me orders to fumigate the town. He'd heard stories, plenty of 'em—killings, men robbed right and left. One night my boys rounded up the blacklegs and thinned 'em out considerable. Bill Hickock got a little revolver practice."

Miriam had learned already that the raw West was very different from the settled and civilized East, but she wondered why the railroad endured the wanton towns that mushroomed and decayed along its path. She was to grasp the truth that fierce toil provokes fierce reactions. Men who worked as hard as the railroad builders demanded hard play. They craved the excitement which boiled in these mad towns—the whiskey, dancing, gambling; the caresses of womanhood's outcasts. Their appetites could not be satisfied with thin gruel. They could not have been driven to such superhuman labor by day—they would have turned

their backs upon the road—if denied equally violent amusement by night. Wise heads, such as Casement's, knew this, but endeavored to curb the killers, discourage the bandits and generally to hold in leash the worst elements of the headquarters towns.

Week after week the great road lunged forward, a shining rapier thrusting at a sullen frontier. Miriam's interest in her new life heightened steadily, as she caught its glowing spirit. She joyed in the great game, fired by the ambition that lashed the builders, the ambition to override or break through every obstacle of Nature and savage man; to win the splendid race. In her father's private car, infinitely to be preferred to the rough shack which called itself the Grand Union Hotel, she had little contact with the life of the town, but out along the road they knew her. She accompanied Marsh in his frequent inspection journeys to the end of track and got to know the faces and names of the brawny giants who were tamping roadbed or swinging sledge. Irish, Italians, Germans and Scandinavians, she thought of them all as friends, and for all she had a bright smile or a pleasant word.

The musketeers invariably received her in state when the Superintendent's special appeared at the end of track. Good men that they were, Sergeant Slattery had been made boss of the shovelers, while Corporal Casey laid down the law to as hard a crew as ever slammed home a spike. Old Schultz, like a faithful dog

at heel, was a kind of assistant boss to Casey, and spent most of his time keeping Pat out of fights provoked by a wagging tongue and a gunpowder temper. Slattery and Casey could scarcely pass the time of day without quarreling, for Pat took delight in irritating the big Sergeant. For an Irishman, Slattery had a very slow sense of humor, taking life seriously, even sternly. Yet at bottom he and Casey were devoted to each other. Four years of comradeship in the army had cemented their friendship. They quarreled, even to blows, but each would have given life for the other.

Miriam witnessed a typical Slattery-Casey engagement, over nothing, as usual, except Pat's hectoring tongue. The Sergeant had been bragging a little about his marksmanship in the army. Pat listened with an eye cocked impudently, then:

"Be me sowl, will ye listen to him, when 'tis well known in Oireland that there niver was a Slattery born who could hit a landlord at tin paces!"

Schultz and Dinny pried them apart. Miriam learned not to take these Celtic explosions seriously. Usually, when she was a guest of the track-layers, Pat entertained her with the chorus of the road, the song he had introduced to speed up his gang. Its rhythm went with the thud-thud-thud of the tamping irons packing earth between the ties, and with the swing and clang of the sledges driving home the spikes. Casey always started the song with

the grand air of an orchestra conductor, picking up his instruments one by one and swinging them into resounding harmony:

"Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, ye tarriers, drill!
Oh, it's work all day,
No sugar in yer tay—
When ye work for the U. Pay Ra-ailway!"

So Casey sang it, with the gang coming in strong on the last two lines, and with the other gangs taking it up along the track and shouting it to the skies. It became the anthem of the road, the Marseillaise of their terrific toil.

Of hostile Indians Miriam had as yet seen none, but reports were coming back constantly of raids made against the grading gangs working far ahead, and against the brave little squads of engineers who were thrusting into the western wilderness, running their lines and searching for the straightest and easiest way. She had seen men brought in from the front, badly wounded. One of them had been scalped, but had survived the frightful injury, and was to live the ordinary course of a man's life. When he was able to be about, he wanted to show Miriam his own scalp which he had recovered when the Sioux warrior dropped it from his belt. He kept the shriveled thing in water, in a glass jar, to keep it moist, and the poor fellow was a long time realizing that he couldn't somehow get it to stay in place upon

his head and grow again. Miriam shuddered every time she saw this man.

Surveyors and even graders had suffered, but so far there had been no Indian attack against the track-laying gangs. But they were forging into perilous country. Red Cloud's Sioux and Porcupine's Cheyennes were painting red, sworn to stop the hated Iron Horse and drive the white men from their lands. Marsh foresaw trouble in the future. He kept in close touch with Fort Kearney at his back and, by courier, with Fort Russell in the Black Hills. Major North reported that his Pawnees were uneasy, and that their keen eyes had read smoke signals far to the West which made them think that big war parties were concentrating. The military guard was increased. Every railroad workman toiled with a rifle at his feet. Most of them carried army revolvers in their belts, and Bowie knives as well. The air vibrated with excitement.

Billy Cody initiated Miriam into the mysteries of buffalo hunting. She had often seen vast herds of the great, clumsy brutes fleeing across the track and even running ahead of the locomotive, to veer away finally and thunder toward the horizon. Mounted on a well-broken cayuse, Miriam followed the hunters until Cody's drivers had turned the herd, then looked on, guarded by one of Cody's men, while the buffalo went thundering past at a long angle, raked by the rifles of the hunters. Every hunter had extra rifles and a man at his side

to load for him, and shot almost as fast as his fingers could pull trigger. Miriam saw the charging beasts plunge ahead, stumble, go down in strange, sprawling heaps, to be skinned where they lay, and the meat to be loaded into wagons. In a few minutes the plain was dotted with them. The sight sickened her. It was not hunting as she had thought of the sport, but butcher's work. She understood its necessity. There was no beef except that which had to be driven eight hundred miles, from Texas. The men had to have meat. But she detested the slaughter and never again accompanied the hunters.

CHAPTER XII

WOMAN'S WIT

"HURRY up wid yer crawlin' shovelers, me min are treadin' upon the heels av thim."

Casey, strolling ahead, beyond the tongue of rails, tossed this insult at Sergeant Slattery.

The big sergeant straightened up, fire in his eye.

" 'Tis me own good byes that have been waitin' half the day fer ye and yer gang of good-fer-nawthins! Little blame to thim, though, with ye promenadin' along the grade, puttin' on the airs an' th' graces of a major-gineral."

"It's indispinsable, I am," returned Casey. " 'Twas no later than yistady that the Gineral Superintindent sint fer me. 'Corporal Casey,' he says, 'Corporal Casey, I'll have ye know,' he says, 'that the U. Pay is daypindin' upon yer industhry and intilligince,' he says. 'Ye must even drive 'em,' he says. 'I misdoubt that the road could be built without ye, Mister Casey,' he says. 'Th' times is harrd an' troublous an' the min are grumblin'. I look to ye, Corporal,' he says."

Slattery snorted derisively, swept his gang with an eye which unerringly spotted any slacker, saw that the work was going steadily, and seated himself upon a pile of crossties,

leaving the job temporarily to Dinny O'Brien, his assistant foreman. Whittling a pipeful from a black plug, he puffed awhile, then spoke his mind seriously to Casey.

"Pat, I do not like the looks of things at all, at all," he said. "For days, as ye should know, there's been little save grumblin' and complaints among the min along the line. They're a divil of a harrd bunch, the best av thim, an' instead of gettin' drunk at night like dacint Christians they assimble to curse the road and all connected wid it.

"They're a mixed lot, Eyetalians, Scandehovians and the breed of Irish we used to hang be th' dozen in Galway to the glory of God and the priservation of th' cows, the tatterdemalions of creation. Until quite raycint it was aisy enough handlin' thim, but of late they've been in a black mood. Th' Injuns have got on their nerves, what wid th' constant scares and alarrms. They're grumblin' and growlin' about th' food, the weather, the wurrk. There's no gettin' along wid 'em at all. The worst of it is two months' pay is overdue. Pay car should have been here yistady, and there's no word av it."

"I'm onaisy mesilf," said Casey. "I've noted symptoms of the desaise in me own assimblage of selicted roughnecks and I've larrupted the ugly faces of half a dozen of thim. There's wan, Tony Figallo, whose face I will yet bash in."

"Ye can't bate 'em all," said Slattery, sen-

sibly. "They are too many. It's like th' Arrmy days, with half a rigimint yearnin' to mutiny because breakfast didn't set well on their stomachs. But there was discipline in the Arrmy, while this scum is free and indepindent and can quit when it plazes thim."

They talked over the troubles that loomed, the discontent of the men, the real hardships that faced them daily, the wild rumors that were buzzing through North Platte and along the line that work was to be suspended because no way had been found through the foothills yet far to the west of the end of track. Casey's unconquerable optimism was inclined to make light of it all, but Sergeant Slattery, older and more used to keeping his feet on the ground, shook his head.

"I don't like th' looks of things, Pat," he said.

Schultz joined them and Slattery whistled for Dinny. The four ate lunch together, in the lee of the stacked crossties, protected from the bitter wind which drove across the prairie. In the midst of the meal they were startled by the report of a heavy rifle, then a succession of shots; yells sweeping crescendo from the end of track, shrill, ululating warwhoops.

The four scrambled to their feet, grabbed rifles and ran along the right of way, mingling with a hundred workmen and two-score soldier guards who were dashing for the crosstie barricades always erected to serve as rude forts for the pioneer gangs. A hundred yards south of

the track a band of Indians, well strung out, raced their ponies at breakneck speed as they shot arrows or fired their muskets at the fleeing men. Two workmen were downed by arrows before the shelter of the barricades could be reached, one killed outright with a shaft through his ribs, the other wounded in the arm.

The raiders, about fifty Brulé Sioux, well mounted on small, rugged ponies, swept past the fort, yelling like demons. Sweeping round in a wide circle, they drove their ponies back along the north side of the track, repeating the volley of arrows and lead slugs. They did little execution, depending almost altogether upon their ancient weapons, poor shots with the white man's rifle. In five minutes they were gone, dots rising and falling against the horizon, the echo of their exultant whoops faintly audible.

Before they were out of sight, the men were back at work as if nothing unusual had occurred. The rhythm of labor was resumed. Such small raids were common enough. Working and fighting on the Union Pacific were intimately and daily connected. In California the Central Pacific had almost no trouble with the decadent tribes through which it took its line, but the Union Pacific was built during the very years when the great plains were most disturbed and when hostile forays were most frequent. Practically the whole Sioux nation, of ten thousand fighting men, the cunningest

and fiercest warriors of the plains, was up in arms against the iron invader, while the Cheyennes, less numerous, but only a shade less formidable, were painting red against the road and murdering graders and surveyors who had ventured into their fastnesses. As a rule the construction gangs were able to take care of themselves, for the gangs were made up of large elements of the recently arrived Irish and of cool-headed and seasoned veterans of the Civil War, men who had served four years, shouldering muskets in many battles.

That night when Casey, Slattery and their gangs rolled into North Platte they found the town boiling with excitement. In the main street a thousand workmen were milling around agitators who were denouncing the road. A good deal of whiskey had circulated and the men were in an ugly mood. With Schultz and young Dinny, Casey and the Sergeant shoved through the close-packed throng, getting many black looks, but avoiding trouble. Casey was itching for it, but Schultz cautioned him.

"Dis iss no dime vor vighting, mein friend," he warned. "Idt iss a dime vor goolness and gommon sense. Dose mens are a powder magazine. One sparg and up she goes! Best go soft. Bick no vights, Gasey!"

They made their way to Superintendent Marsh's private car, a little anxious about "Miss Miriam," but were reassured at the sight of the soldiers on guard. Marsh had thought it prudent to request a detail from the

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MOVING DAY IN NORTH PLATTE—"HELL ON WHEELS."

lieutenant commanding, feeling that the sight of the Army uniform would do more than anything else to discourage ex-soldiers from disorder.

"It's all right, Pat," said Miriam, smiling at the sight of Casey's troubled face. "None of the men has bothered us, but there's bad news from back along the line. Father will tell you all about it."

Marsh appeared, face lined with worry.

"Bad business, boys," he said. "A whole train was wiped out this morning only thirty miles to the east. The Sioux ambushed the pay train, wiped out trainmen and the military escort, killing every soul, burned the train and rode away with the payroll, more than $100,000 in currency. There will be hell to pay, I'm afraid. The men are talking it over now and the loud-mouthed element are working them up to trouble.

"First word I got was a message from a field operator. That young Virginian—what's his name—the young fellow who was General Lee's telegrapher, always wears his Confederate uniform—got the flash in my office about nine o'clock this morning. I hurried a rescue train back along the line but it was all over when the troops got there. Nothing left but to bury the dead. Thirty good men butchered!

"They got the story from the paymaster who was shot full of arrows but still living when they found him. The paytrain was making good time toward North Platte when the engi-

neer spotted a small bunch of Indians a quarter of a mile ahead. There were half a dozen on each side of the track, mounted, with a lariat tight-stretched between them.

Donohue, the engineer, saw what they were aiming at and pulled the throttle. Next minute Sioux bucks were spilled all over the prairie, ponies racing wildly toward the hills. They had tried to lasso the iron horse and had got the surprise of their lives. Everybody on the pay-train saw what had happened and took it as a great joke. Not a soul dreamed of what was ahead.

"Four or five miles farther along, Donohue saw the track was blocked by a big pile of cross-ties. There was no sign of Indians about, so Donohue sent his fireman ahead to clear away the ties. The young fellow was throwing them off when an arrow flashed from nowhere and dropped him. The train was at a dead stop, the paymaster said, everybody watching. They saw the fireman throw out his arms and sprawl face downward upon the track.

"The next minute the plain was crawling with Sioux. There must have been three hundred in the band. Scouts who had wormed along belly to the earth, like snakes, while the main body and the ponies had kept out of sight behind a long, low ridge three-quarters of a mile north of the track. When the train stopped the scouts opened the fight, first killing the fireman, then riddling the engineer. The whole band swarmed at the train. The men put up a

good fight, but they were outnumbered, ten to one.

"With both Donohue and the fireman dead, there was nobody to run the engine. They were caught like rats in a trap. One by one, soldiers and trainmen were dragged out and slaughtered. I told them back East they ought never send a train this far without a double crew for the engine, but they can't seem to understand back there what we are up against. General Dodge will be here in a day or so. He knows Indians. We are up against war, not just a few thieving raids. These plains Indians are determined to stop the road. There are at least ten thousand hostiles scattered between here and Cheyenne."

"Can you do anything with our men, Pat?" Miriam asked eagerly. "This awful thing has unsettled them. Father is worried sick. There had been delay in getting the payroll from Omaha and now the money is gone. That means another long delay before the red tape is straightened out. Will you talk to them, reason with them?"

"I'll do me bist, Miss Miriam," said Casey, soberly. "But I'd like to pound a little sinse into thim wid me two fists."

"No, Pat, that won't do," said Miriam. "This is a case for diplomacy. Make them understand that father is doing the best he can; that we are all victims, that the payroll will be hurried along as rapidly as possible. Every good Irishman ought to be a diplomat."

The musketeers left the private car and walked back to the main street of the town. They had their supper at the railroad boarding house, kept by a Hibernian lady who gave them rough but plentiful meals. After supper they drifted out among the crowds and did what they could to oil the troubled waters. It was little enough as they quickly found. Some of the men were reasonable enough to see the situation in its true light, knowing that every effort would be made to replace the money stolen by the Indians, and understanding that the ferocity of the morning raid would force the military and the railroad to strengthen escorts and so minimize danger to the workers. But the majority were carried along in one of those blind gusts of resentment and passion against which argument is futile.

They turned in that night gloomy over the outlook. Even Casey's spirits were dampened, and for once he dropped his hectoring, provocative habit. Slattery brooded silently, while old Schultz had little to say.

"Idt iss badt," he remarked. "Dose fellers are like tchildren—voolish, blowed by der vinds of passion. Ve vill see on der morrow. Dey talk strike now."

"I'd like to strike 'em, the dirty omadhauns," said Casey, truculently.

Which sufficiently expressed the sentiments of the Musketeers. Silence fell upon the bunkhouse, silence broken only by the snoring of tired men.

CHAPTER XIII

DEROUX, OF THE SMOKY HILLS

Troubles march in battalions. So Thomas Marsh found next morning when he went to headquarters to face the gathering storm. A deputation of workmen appeared immediately and told him flatly that a strike would be called unless their delayed pay was forthcoming within forty-eight hours. The leaders were Tim Doolan, "the big harp in Car 6," as Casey had quite adequately described him to Miriam, and the Italian, Tony Figallo. Marsh dismissed them, saying he would see what could be done, and advising them to keep out of trouble.

"We've got two days before they quit, if it comes to that," he told Jesson. "I hope to find a way of ironing out that wrinkle, but here's something worse than discontented workmen and a strike threat."

He handed to the engineer a telegram from General Dodge:

"Short cut through the Black Hills must be found before headquarters moves to Julesburg. This is imperative. Directors in New York talk of suspending operations unless pass for the road is found to save 200 miles and $2,000,000. What do your engineers report?"

"Comes at a happy time," commented Jesson.

"Doesn't it?" replied Marsh, dryly. "Somebody around here is about as well informed as I am. The men have been getting rumors that the road is apt to be held up because we haven't been able to locate a practical way through the hills, and they are afraid the layoff will come before they get their back pay. They are a suspicious lot, afraid of being cheated."

"What can we do?" asked Jesson.

"Only the Lord knows," said Marsh, sadly. "For two months I have had a dozen of my best men combing the hills. What with Indian trouble and one thing or another, they haven't got anywhere. I am beginning to believe there is no pass. Deroux insists there isn't, says the road will have to follow a new line, swinging south through the Smoky River country in Colorado."

"Who is Deroux?"

"Joe Deroux? Biggest landholder in this part of the country, to the southwest, that is. A damned smooth citizen; well educated; rather a good fellow. Owns the whole Smoky River section. He's a strapping big chap, handsome in a florid, foreign kind of way. French blood with a dash of Indian, they say. The story is that his father came into the country from Canada, thirty or forty years ago, got in strong with the Cheyennes, married in the tribe, bought up land from them and sealed the grants with patents from the Government. I suppose Joe Deroux holds title to enough land to lose the State of Maine in."

"Well, one can hardly blame him for trying to get the road built through his land," said Jesson.

"I don't," said Marsh. "That's only human, natural. He insists that it will be better for the road in every way if it swings to the south; that extra cost will be more than made up by extra traffic in the next few years. I am inclined to agree with him, inclined to think he is talking straight. He knows the country and is dead sure that the Black Hills are an impossible engineering proposition. The concensus of our own reports seem to back him up."

"What's the hitch then? Why don't we go south?" inquired Jesson.

"Cost, mainly, plus the public clamor for speed. Turning south would run the mileage up enormously, through a country that would cost us upward of $100,000 a mile. That's pretty steep even when we are building against time. The directors are balking and General Dodge holds with them. It seems that he is fairly familiar with the Black Hills. He keeps saying there must be a practicable pass."

"What are you going to do?"

"I swear I don't know. I'm at my wit's end. Deroux will be here to-day asking for an answer, but I shall have to put him off. I'm expecting the General himself to-morrow or the next day. That shows how serious the situation is."

Shouts and gun firing broke in upon their talk, wild yells and hoarse hurrahs. Marsh and Jesson went to the window. Down the street

clattered a cavalcade of horsemen coming at a fast trot, riding with utter disregard for the packed throngs. Men and women scurried out of the way. There was a rush from the saloons. The leader of the cavalcade jerked his horse to a standstill so abruptly that it reared. As he swung from the saddle there was more cheering in which Marsh and Jesson caught the shout, "Deroux!"

"There's our man," said Marsh. "You see, he comes in style. That's his way. He's rather a feudal lord in these parts, with his influence over the Cheyennes, his immense land holdings and the fear that he personally inspires. He has qualities that these people admire, or respect. He's a dead shot, fearless, throws his money around and loves to make a big show. I've seen him lose a thousand on the turn of a card at Haller's faro bank."

They watched Deroux as he held the reins of his big roan horse, sweeping the crowd with his bold eyes. Self-sure, arrogant, he looked them over like a master. A white buffalo coat fell to the ankles of his riding boots. His face, broad, with high cheek bones, was very swarthy. Black eyes glittered in this dark countenance. His nose was large and heavy but slightly aquiline. His mouth was full, with thick lips. It was an arresting face, with its strength, arrogance and careless good nature. The hair that escaped under his broad hat was jet black and fell thickly to his shoulders. Taller than the average, Deroux was so broad-shouldered, thick-

chested and heavily limbed that he seemed shorter than he really was. Self-indulgence, mastery, competence, power, were written all over the man, expressed in every move he made.

He stood for a few moments, holding the crowd with his eyes, then threw up his free hand in good-humored salute.

"Hah! You are glad to see me, eh? Joe Deroux! That is good! I will treat you all. Go to Haller. Tell him the drinks are on me. Whiskey for the men, champagne for the ladies! Always the best in town for the ladies!"

Another imperious, sweeping gesture of the big right arm sent his retainers to the right about, horses plunging against tight-held curb bits. They went out of town like the wind, firing their revolvers as a departing salute to their chief.

Deroux strode toward the railroad office, throwing a word to an admirer here and there, as a man throws a bone to his appealing hounds. A girl glided from the crowd and slipped an arm through his. He glanced down, smiled, swung her from her slippered feet and kissed her resoundingly. She promptly slapped his face. He laughed as his swarthy cheek glowed dull red from the stinging slap.

"Now I know that it's my little Ruby!" he shouted, in a voice which carried the length of the street. "My little wildcat, the belle of the metropolis! And you would strike Deroux for the matter of a kiss!"

"Yes and stick a knife in you, Joe, if I felt like it," said the girl. "You ought to know me by this time. But I'm real glad to see you. You're a good scout when you want to be. I haven't forgotten the time you laid out that big miner who tried to maul me with his dirty paws. Ugh! how I hate men, anyway!"

"And you, my little Ruby, are a pearl among swine," laughed Deroux. "Have you knifed any of the boys recently? You're pretty handy with your little steel toothpick."

"Haven't have occasion to, Joe," she replied. "They've pretty well got it through their heads that I won't stand for their nonsense. I'll drink with 'em—though most of it is Jed's cold tea—I'll dance with 'em and I'll *listen* to their drunken love making, but I won't have their dirty hands laid on me. I can't stand it."

"How is Haller treating you?"

"Oh, Jed's all right. The old boy is right there with his big Colt when the fun gets too hot, and he is liberal enough. I'm making money, Joe. I've got a good pile saved. If I can stick it out I'll have enough to go back East with. We girls get a commission on every bottle of wine or the trade we bring to the bar, and the gamblers do the right thing by us for steering people to the tables."

"Good girl!" said Deroux. "I may want to talk to you, Ruby, before I leave town. I don't know yet. Something just occurred to me."

Jesson, who had remained at the window, witnessed this meeting between Deroux and a

girl who was remarkably pretty, he decided. Slim, black-haired, with fearless brown eyes, an uptilted nose above a small red mouth and little round chin, a figure that drew his eye—here was a girl worth looking up. There was something provocative about her face, something spirited and insolent, which excited his pulse. He was suddenly conscious of a keen interest in her. He liked the way she had slapped Deroux, striking as a snake strikes.

"Little vixen, but a beauty," he thought as he turned from the window.

Deroux flung open the door and stormed into the room, impetuous as the North Wind. He greeted Marsh with a shout and outstretched left hand. Marsh shook hands.

"How are you, Mr. Deroux?" he said. "You are punctual."

"I am always prompt," said Deroux, showing his big white teeth. "Prompt as death. Many have found it so. But with my friends it is the same. I do not like to keep friends waiting. I am here, Mr. Marsh, to offer you a grand opportunity. You shall build your road through Smoky River. I shall give you such terms as will amaze you."

"How long can you be in town?" asked Marsh.

"As long as my presence is required," said Deroux. "I never hurry. It does not pay, my friends."

"Oh, yes," said Marsh. "That reminds me. You two don't know each other. This is Mr.

Jesson, my engineer and this is Mr. Deroux of whom I was speaking, Jesson."

Jesson offered his hand and Deroux quickly gripped it, his right hand in his overcoat pocket. Involuntarily, the engineer glanced toward the hidden hand, but catching a glint in Deroux's black eyes, quick annoyance, almost anger, he looked away. The two men stood for a moment, face to face, appraising each other. What Deroux saw may have helped him to recover his good humor, for when he spoke again, it was with riotous amiability.

"I am patience itself, my good friends, when I serve the people I like best, always including Deroux."

Again the big white teeth gleamed.

"I asked you," said Marsh, "because General Dodge will be here in a day or two and we will then settle the question of whether we must abandon the old line and accept your proposition. It may be you are right. It begins to look that way."

"Of course I am right," laughed Deroux. "I am usually right. In this country it is dangerous to be wrong. I am like Davy Crockett. I first make sure the game is straight, then I bet the limit. Surveyors have been searching the Black Hills for twenty years trying to find a pass that the good God neglected to put there, not knowing, of course, that you gentlemen would ever need it."

Shouts, scattered, then merging into a heavy chorus, interrupted him. The street was in new

tumult. Deroux, lithe as a panther for all of his bulk, reached the window at a bound.

"Hah! It is a revolution, my friend. Your subjects are marching upon us. It seems this is the Bastille which they would conquer and throw down. They do not look pretty, these dogs. Shall I go out and whip them down the street? I will teach them to know me, Joe Deroux!"

"No, for God's sake, nothing of that sort!" said Marsh. "Let me handle it. I think I know what's happened. They have repudiated the truce agreement. Too much tanglefoot. I will talk to them."

The door opened. Miriam flew in like a bird seeking refuge from the storm. Her eyes were big with excitement but there was no fear in them.

"Oh, Daddy, they're coming!" she cried. "Casey and Slattery tried to stop them, but it was no use."

She paused, seeing Deroux whose bright, black eyes were darting admiration.

"My daughter, Mr. Deroux," said Marsh.

"A la bonne heure!" cried Deroux. "Now I know that my visit to the capital of the great Union Pacific will be fortunate! Here is good fortune flying in at the very door to gladden the heart of Joe Deroux!"

"There speaks the Frenchman," said Miriam. "Am I not right?"

"Absolutely, Miss Marsh," said Deroux. "It is true that my people have been Americans, on

both sides of the line, for more than two hundred years, but French we remain, Americans though we are."

The door burst open and the Musketeers arrived in a heap, Casey stumbling, the others sprawling over him. As they disentangled themselves it was Sergeant Slattery who explained how they had charged through the mob. The strikers had tried to prevent them from reaching headquarters, but the musketeers' teamwork had been irresistible.

"They are demandin' speech with yez," said Casey. "By yer leave, sor, we'll give 'em hell if ye say the word!"

"No, I'll talk to them," said Marsh. He put on his hat and went outside. Miriam and the Musketeers followed. Deroux hesitated, then went to the window where Jesson joined him. They could see and hear.

Marsh raised his hand, attempting to still the tumult. For a moment they listened, then the roar broke out again, drowning his plea. Again he tried, with the same result. Casey leaped forward, face working with rage, but Miriam caught his arm.

"Keep back, Pat. You'll only make matters worse. Father! Let me try. The men like me, I think. Perhaps they will listen to me."

Marsh nodded, reluctantly. Miriam stepped forward, a little figure of grace and daintiness. She faced them in unhurried silence, smiling confidently, picking out familiar faces in the front ranks and recognizing them with little

nods of pleasure. By degrees the ugly chorus died. The men became quiet, all looking directly at her, expectant, curious.

"Men," she began in her clear voice, bell-like in the stillness, "I want you to believe that I am your friend, that I want to see you get justice; all that is yours. Will you believe me when I tell you that the road will deal squarely by you? You will all get your money just as soon as the payroll can be made up again in Omaha and rushed here. I know that to be true."

"That's no way to talk to 'em, Miss! Ye got to swear at 'em," Casey complained at her back. "They don't know what ye mean."

She silenced him with a backward jab of her elbow.

"You will get your pay and a bonus. Father will see to that. And any other real grievance you have will be righted. Men, my heart is in the road. You are all good Americans. Won't you do the right thing for your country, the big thing? Won't you go back to work for another week until this trouble, which is not the road's fault, is straightened out? You, Bill! And you, Tony! I ask you only to do what is right and manly, what any woman would expect."

She waited with the same calm, confident smile.

"By God! There's a woman worth fighting for!" exclaimed Deroux, black eyes snapping.

Peter Jesson made no reply, but he flashed a quick look at the Frenchman.

Outside the mob hesitated, uneasy, shifting from foot to foot as the men looked at each other doubtfully. Somebody laughed in the back of the crowd. In a moment all were laughing. Like a fresh breeze, good humor ran through them. Old Bill Williams pulled off his battered hat and made Miriam the caricature of a bow.

"Anything to oblige a lady!" he said, and a roar of laughter went up.

Latin, and a born actor, Tony Figallo swept the ground with his hat.

"For the beautiful signorina," he said, "Tony, he build the beeg ra-ailroad heemself, alone!"

"Thank you, Bill. Thank you, Tony. You will not regret it. I give you my promise."

The crowd broke and scattered, cheering Miriam as they went. The gang bosses rounded up their men and herded them to the waiting construction trains. Mr. Casey stuck out his chest.

"Sure," he said, "it was me Irish iloquence that did it."

"Yes it was"—said Slattery—"not!"

CHAPTER XIV

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

After supper that evening in the Union Pacific Hotel, a meal which he consumed in exclusive dignity at a table especially set for him, Joe Deroux lighted his cigar and strolled through the jammed street until he came to a big tent whose signboard, swung above the doorway, announced in letters two feet high:

JUDGE HALLER'S SALOON AND BAR

As he smiled at the familiar sign, his ear caught the jumble of sounds from within, hoarse voices at the bar, calling for drinks or bellowing jests; the shrill soprano of Haller's dance hall girls, the click-clack of chips rattling good or evil fortune upon the tables of the gamblers, the quick strains of the orchestra and loud cries of the caller inviting couples to a quadrille.

"The fat old fox is doing well," he said to himself.

He pushed open the door, blinking in the thick atmosphere of tobacco smoke, liquor, sweat and perfume. He was recognized and wild shouts went up as always, when this baron of the out-

lands deigned to show himself. Deroux waved a casual greeting, made his way through the press of men and women to the long bar and shook hands with Haller, the proprietor.

Jed Haller, who claimed and was ready to defend at the point of a six-shooter the title of "Judge" he had conferred upon himself, was a ponderous chevalier of fortune, rising fifty in years, who had prospered through a useful combination of shrewdness and elastic conscience, the whole flavored with joviality. He had originated somewhere in the South, and laid claim to kinship with the old slave-holding class, but belied the boast by utter lack of education and polish. His antecedents were foggy, but in that time and country nobody cared two bits about such frills as antecedents and there was no one to venture embarrassing questions.

Drifting from Heaven knows where, Haller had seen his great chance with the railroad. The end of the war found him flush. He organized a business of following the road with his movable saloon, dance hall and gambling house. Simultaneously, and for business reasons strictly, he established a court of law in whatever new town he opened his bar. His motto was "Law and order if you have to shoot 'em first," and to give him his due he was usually able to discourage or check the violence his powerful whiskey provoked.

It was his custom to sit behind the middle of the long bar, and from a high stool, his tall hat pushed to the back of his head, keep an eagle

eye upon the motley throng which nightly jammed his place. Nothing escaped him, though he frequently pretended to be absorbed in a law book, the only book he possessed. This was a copy of the Revised Statutes of the State of Illinois for the year of 1860. In this important tome he groped for such legal terms as he needed to garnish his decisions. At his right and left a corps of bartenders were always busy, and at each end of the bar a man with a sawed-off shotgun stood ready to enforce the judicial decrees.

Judge Haller's "Saloon and Court" was contained in a frame a hundred and twenty feet long by forty feet wide, a frame of detachable sections, covered with canvas. At the back end the place was smoothly floored for dancing, a large space being devoted to that gladsome pursuit. "The Arabian Nights," which was the other and fancier name of Haller's establishment, was the great public resort of the transitory railroad capital. To the Arabian Nights both good and evil flocked to enjoy their leisure and the savor of the drinking and gambling.

The right side of the canvas-covered structure was lined with a splendid bar, where the Judge presided in state. The sideboards were stocked with every conceivable variety of alcoholic drink, from fine French champagne to St. Louis beer, the latter arriving by the barrel daily over the new road; with rye and Bourbon whiskey, and with liquors and cigars. Sideboards and bar glittered with cut glass, goblets, ice pitchers

and mirrors. Oil paintings of battle scenes and of voluptuous ladies garbed for heated climes hung upon the sidewalls of the long room. Most of the remaining space was filled with gambling tables for faro, roulette, rondo coolo, blackjack, monte and wheels of fortune over which presided a pale, cold-eyed gentry garbed, as a usual thing, in ministerial broadcloth.

By day, Haller's Arabian Nights was rather quiet, but when night fell, the yellow lights streamed forth and the brass band sent forth its inspiring call to mirth, the long room soon filled with a throng of four or five hundred miners, ranchers, railroad men, gamblers, rowdies and the disinherited from no man knew where. It was then that the brass band descended from the raised platform near the dancing floor and gave way to the stringed orchestra. Quadrilles, cotillions and waltzes were the order of the evening, with the square dances most in favor as offering the readiest excuse for rough fun and horse play. At every summons of the caller the girls seized partners and led them to the floor. After every dance there was generous buying of drinks, champagne if the partner was in funds, otherwise whiskey. Some of the girls, by previous arrangement with the bartenders, were served only with cold tea which could not be told from the hard liquor if no one became inquisitive.

Such as did not care for dancing, immune to the blandishments of the young ladies, crowded to the tables of chance. The musical rattle of

dice, the whirr of the fast-spinning roulette wheel, the incessant clash of ivory chips, the clinkle of glasses, the shrill voices of the women and the hoarse laughter of the men made a chorus scarcely to be matched anywhere in the world. As the night aged, the crowd thinned and the bar trade slackened, the astute Judge provided fresh entertainment. A young man mounted the orchestra platform and sang to the accompaniment of the piano. He sang old ballads, ballads of home and mother, always to deafening applause. Some of the girls wept, old memories raked by this sentimental warbling. They were easily stirred, these women who encouraged trade at Haller's.

Deroux lounged at the bar, spending his money free-handedly. He amused himself by commanding various groups to join him. He drank heavily, straight Kentucky whiskey, but the high proof stuff had little visible effect upon him. It merely fired his reckless blood, sending his voice up a pitch or two, heightening his characteristic swagger.

Peter Jesson, cool, superior, well-groomed, entered the hall and strolled to the bar, his light eyes taking in the scene of blurred merriment, his lips curling contemptuously. Deroux marked him instantly and called across the room. Jesson hesitated. He hated to be made conspicuous. Deroux's shout had made him the target of a hundred pairs of eyes. Should he ignore this swashbuckler of the prairies or would that cause a still more disagreeable

scene? Perhaps Deroux meant well enough. A man never knew out in this God-forsaken country when such a fellow might be useful. He made his leisurely way to the bar, accepting Deroux's outthrust left hand.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Jesson. I was wishing for somebody to talk to—somebody besides these pigs. Anything new at headquarters?"

"No, not much," replied Jesson, lazily, pouring a drink from the bottle of Bourbon that Deroux pushed toward him. "Ah! This is good whiskey. Amazingly good!"

"It's my private stock," said Deroux. "Haller keeps it for me. Help yourself, my friend. I am honored. So there is nothing new?"

"Not especially. Marsh decided this afternoon to send me out to the Black Hills to make a last search for the pass he thinks ought to be there. Not a pleasant assignment."

"Detestable," said Deroux. "Two hundred miles of desert and mountain gorges and in a country of very bad Indians. A foolish quest for an impossible object!"

"Those are the orders," said Jesson. "'Ours not to reason why,' you know. I shall try to get the job done with as soon as possible. I am not enamoured of life in the bush."

Deroux darted a quick glance at Jesson but read in the engineer's face nothing more than he had already gathered. He became thoughtful, speaking only occasionally. Jesson touched

him on the arm, then pointed to a girl on the dancing floor.

"Who is that girl, Mr. Deroux? I think I saw you speak to her to-day."

"That's Ruby—Ruby Kenny," said Deroux. "A very pretty girl, my friend. Very high-spirited. By no means a young woman to take liberties with even in such a place as this."

"What!" exclaimed Jesson, incredulously.

"It is so," said Deroux. "I assure you, it is so. The girl is—what you call—straight. Various bold gentlemen have been convinced of it."

The engineer, interested, lingered at the bar, but after an hour or so, Deroux had enough of the place. As he started for the door, he caught Ruby's eye and jerked his head. She slid through the crowd, sinuous as a cat. Deroux detained her briefly.

"I may want to see you at the hotel presently. Business. If I send for you, come quickly. It's a big thing."

He went out into the night. Ruby looked after him curiously. Then she shrugged her bare shoulders and drifted back to the center of the hall. Her roving eye fell upon the players at Kentucky Jack's poker table, and particularly upon a sour-faced railroad timekeeper whose luck had been about on a par with his skill. As Ruby stepped behind his chair he pushed his last stack into the pot. Kentucky Jack showed a fullhouse and raked in the pot. Sour Face drew back from the table with a string of curses,

and so suddenly that the chair bumped Miss Kenny's shapely knees.

"Can't you see what you're doing, you clumsy ox?" she snapped. "What's the matter? Did losing a few dollars ruin your life?"

He snatched a glass of whiskey from the table and dashed it in her face. She sprang backward, face white, eyes blazing, as the room boiled. The men at the table clutched at the timekeeper, but he dodged them and made for the door. Swift as a leopard, Ruby jerked a derringer from her dress, blazing a shot at the fleeing figure. The timekeeper dropped with a yell. Old Haller's stentorian voice was booming as he rapped the bar with the barrel of his long forty-five, and the two Texans guarding the ends of the bar were now standing on top of it, threatening the crowd with their guns.

"Shut up!" Haller boomed. "Shut up, everybody! This is a law and order house. This bar of likker is now a bar of justice. The lady what done the shootin' will step forward. Likewise, all interested parties. Hank, bring the punctured party to the bar, that is, if he's able to walk."

There was a surge forward. Chairs, tables, stools and empty kegs were dragged toward the bar. The Judge, high hat pushed back upon his grizzled locks, fat red face beaded from the heat and excitement, his stubby forefinger pawing at the soiled pages of the Revised Statutes of Illinois, established court from his high stool behind the bar. Ruby was led before His Honor

and stood leaning over the counter. It was apparent that there was to be no great formality between distinguished judge and fair defendant. The timekeeper, who had stopped a bullet with his shoulder, and whose disposition by this time greatly resembled that of a wounded badger, was seated in a chair near Miss Kenny, under the Judge's eye. There was a good deal of buzzing and giggling, but Haller ended such frivolity with a bang of his revolver-gavel.

"Silence in the court!" he roared. "This court yearns for quiet."

He returned to pawing his lawbook. Ruby, as a much-interested party, leaned over his plump elbow. Her quick eye caught a citation which seemed to apply. From a hasty reading of the unfamiliar legal jargon she gathered that somewhere back in Illinois, in the year of grace, 1860, Maggie Rush had committed a battery and some small mayhem upon the peaceful person of one Ah Fat Song, and that the judgment of the case had created a valuable precedent for the guidance of justice. Ruby pointed out this instance to Judge Haller who was immediately impressed. To the prisoner he said:

"You bean't a Chinaman, be yuh?"

"Nah," said Sour Face.

" 'Twon't do, Ruby," said the Judge.

Abandoning all precedents, he set his own sails:

"As the Court sees the case—"

One of the dance hall girls slipped through the crowd and whispered in Ruby's ear. Ruby

nodded, skipped backward and made an affected curtsey to old Haller. He looked at her, inquiringly.

"If Your Honor pleases," said Ruby, "Mr. Deroux sends word that he requires my charming presence at the hotel. So, if you don't mind, ta-ta!"

Haller scratched his head, pushing the tall hat still farther back.

"The fair defendant is excused," he ruled, even as Ruby disappeared into the street. "The case kin go right on without her." He paused, deliberating heavily.

"As the Court sees it," he resumed, chewing a fat cigar, "the defendant, Ruby, is accused of emptying her little shootin' iron at this here polecat with felonious attempt to make a better citizen outen him, which same can't be did in the Court's opinion. But the Court has deeliberated long and earnest over this case and has reached the following conclusion, to wit, all and sundry: that the false alarm we see before us, and hereinbefore referred to as said plaintiff, threw a glass of whiskey in the fair face of a lady what's known to tote a gun. In the opinion of the Court that's attempted suicide, to be dealt with accordin' to law. The verdict is that the drinks are on this aforesaid lizard, and Hank, my deppity, will see that the fine is paid, pronto!"

Haller's verdict was greeted with a wild burst of cheering and laughter, joined in by every man and woman in the hall except Sour Face, the

plaintiff. His protests that he was broke—hadn't a dollar—went for nothing. The lanky deputy, carrying the all-persuading shotgun, accompanied the timekeeper to his boarding-house where he found enough to settle the liquid fine.

CHAPTER XV

DEROUX SHOWS HIS HAND

BEFORE the learned judge in The Arabian Nights had delivered the verdict which exonerated Ruby from the charge of attempted homicide, which, indeed, presented her to the public as one who had sought to confer upon them a sterling benefit, the girl herself was tapping lightly upon the door of Deroux's room in the Grand Union Hotel. The door was opened instantly by a youth who stood high in Deroux's feudality, a Texan who went by the name of the Nueces Kid and who possessed every engaging trait of the diamond-back rattlesnake. He grinned a thin-lipped greeting.

"Oh, hello, Kid," said Ruby, cheerfully, "haven't they hung you yet?"

"The hombres never lived that could get their rope on me, girl," boasted the slender Texan.

"That's what all you story-book bad men say," jibed Miss Kenny, though she knew well enough that the Nueces Kid was as dangerous as a sidewinder gliding through the sagebrush.

"Ah, go to h—," began the Kid, then remembered that he was addressing a lady.

"Hello, Ruby," said Joe Deroux, rising from his chair at the table where he had been sitting

with a plump, bearded companion very soberly dressed. Ruby's quick eye was magnetized by the golden burden of the table, stacks of gold coin neatly arranged, the most money Ruby had ever seen in one pile, and a good deal of the coin of the Republic had passed under the eye of this brisk young person. Deroux noted her glance of unrepressed amazement.

"I brought a little small change with me from the ranch," he said, lightly. "It might interest you to know that this gold came out of my own mine, Ruby, minted for me by the Government. What do you think of that, hey?"

"I would say that you overlooked a bet, Joe," said Ruby. "I am surprised you didn't coin it yourself. I wouldn't put it past you, you brigand!"

Deroux threw back his great black head, laughing uproariously, his vanity tickled.

Ruby leveled a cool gaze at Smith, Marsh's chief clerk, the plump, bearded man who had not seen any necessity whatever for removing his hat or for standing to greet a dance-hall girl. She walked over to him in her graceful, undulating way, one hand on her hip, caught the brim of his hat between thumb and forefinger, jerked it from his head and spun it to a corner of the room. Smith flushed dull red and gave the girl an angry glance from his little, shifty eyes, then passed off his discomfiture with a loud laugh.

"Who's your polite friend, Joe?" asked Ruby. "But you don't need to tell me. I'll bet you a double eagle against a pair of silk stock-

ings that he's one of old Brigham Young's Mormon crew."

"You win," chuckled Deroux, delighted with Miss Kenny's insolence, and with nothing but contempt for the scamp he had bought and paid for. "You're a bishop or something almost as important over in Zion, aren't you, Smith?"

"I have the honor of being a humble follower of the great Prophet of the Latter Day Saints. That is all," said Smith, unctuously. "I did not know the young lady was a friend of yours, Mr. Deroux."

"All young ladies are my friends," said the big Frenchman. "But, Ruby, what's this about you plugging a careless gent over in Haller's? How was your shooting this time?"

"Rotten," said Miss Kenny, laconically. "The damned gun caught in my dress, Joe, or that hound would never throw whiskey in another woman's face. What's the matter with the men around here, anyway? Most of them that I have seen lately haven't any more manners than swine." She pointed her remark with a stabbing glance at the Mormon.

"Better luck next time," said Deroux, consolingly. "I sent for you, Ruby, to interest your intelligent mind in a little matter of big business. It is a matter which is connected with the decoration of the table top. First of all, do you know Jesson, Superintendent Marsh's chief engineer?"

"No," said Ruby, "I don't know him Joe, but I don't mind admitting to an old friend that

I would like to. He's a handsome rascal. He gave me the eye last night in Haller's. I could see that he was dying to meet me but I kept out of his way, purposely. I know his type of fine gentleman. Stand 'em off and they get keener than ever. I think I'd like him, Joe, if I could put him through a course of sprouts."

"Good!" said Deroux. "I'll see that you meet him, but it won't be in any ordinary way. You have already caught his interest, Ruby, and I have warmed it up some. Now, I'll put my cards face down. I trust you.

"This man, Jesson, is the key to the situation that interests me. He is Marsh's chief engineer. He is engaged to that pretty little daughter of Marsh's. You have seen her about?"

"Oh, often," said Ruby. "What's more, she's a dear, not a bit stuck up like some of these Eastern dames that come out here and give us girls the fishy eye."

"Well, she's engaged to our friend, Jesson," Deroux went on. "That makes him even solider with Marsh. I have it straight from Jesson himself that he is to be sent out in a day or so to make a last effort to find a pass through the Black Hills. Win or lose, Marsh will take Jesson's word, the more willingly because the road can't stand still very long. They're jumpy in New York over the whole business. Smith, here, tells me that the directors are worrying Dodge and Marsh and demanding action, saying that the short cut through the hills must be located or else the road must turn south. And

if it goes south it has to build through Joe Deroux's land.

"This is a big thing, Ruby. Let me tell you exactly. It means at least half a million dollars to me, direct. It means that in ten years, maybe five, the value of every section of land I own will be trebled or quadrupled. It means that somewhere in the Smoky River country a city will spring up, and I know just the place. In the end, my pretty Ruby, riches and power for me, good fortune for all that follow me and especially for you. Especially for you, my charming little friend—beautiful clothes, diamonds, what you will. Jesson, if you want him.

"Now follow me. Joe Deroux does things thoroughly. Draw down to your hand and bet the stack, is Deroux's way, Ruby. Little things make or break big plans. So I telegraphed to New York friends. They investigated this handsome Mr. Jesson, this fine-gentleman engineer. What do they tell me? I will read you this telegram, short and sweet. It is in cypher but I shall interpret:

" 'You can depend upon the following for entire accuracy: Man you ask about comes from old family once rich. Has highest social standing but continually embarrassed by lack of means and debts due to gambling and—'

"I think I shall omit the next part," said Deroux.

"You needn't, Joe," snapped Ruby. "If this is a missing word puzzle I will supply the word—'women.' Is that right?"

"Dead center!" said Deroux. "Here's the rest of it:

" 'to his attentions to expensive ladies of the demi-monde. Engaged to Miss M. Ambitious for money. Nothing crooked in his record but who could be handled if approached with a big proposition.'

"Voilà! There you have it. 'A man who could be handled if approached with a big proposition!' You, my little friend, are the 'big proposition.' "

"You're a smart devil, Joe, but this time I don't get you."

"Ah, but you will," smiled Deroux. "It is all very simple. You have caught the man's eye, a discriminating eye. You have intrigued his interest. He is beginning to wonder about you, my attractive little friend. He is bored. You stimulate him. Interest warms to admiration. In turn, he attracts you. The good seed is sown. Where the heart leads the trail is clear."

He paused, black eyes agleam.

"All right, Joe. Let us admit that he is my meat. What then? Where does that get us?"

"To our destination, ma petite! There is an affair between you—how serious I leave to you. The man becomes the slave of one of the prettiest of her sex."

He bowed. Ruby laughed, self-consciously. Mr. Smith of Zion drew down the corners of his thin lips, a manifestation which did not escape Deroux's roving eye.

"The follower of the great Prophet of Mormon does not approve of this particular form of slavery," he cried gayly. "They do not do things so in the new Jerusalem. You would not be happy in our Mr. Smith's city."

"That may be," said Miss Kenny, quietly, "but I would thin out the saints some before they tamed me, and I would begin with this specimen here."

"You must not be too hard on Mr. Smith," laughed Deroux. "He is a valuable man. There is a close tie between us, is there not?"

There was contempt in his laugh. Smith chewed his beard, averting his gaze to the window. Ruby, amazed at Deroux's frankness before a stranger, flashed a glance of inquiry.

"Do not be concerned. Mr. Smith is a very faithful gentleman—to Joe Deroux. Mr. Smith, like most of us, is eager for fortune, but he is especially desirous of maintaining in the flesh his honorable estate among the followers of the Prophet. Therefore, Mr. Smith keeps me very accurately informed."

"Oh, get to the point, Joe," said Ruby. "Just what is it you expect me to do?"

"There is no hurry. Conversation with you is always inspiring to Deroux. You have wit, intelligence. It is your feminine curiosity which pricks you. It shall be gratified instantly.

"You will meet Mr. Peter Jesson. Thanks to our well-informed Mr. Smith, I have planned this episode in all of its delicate shadings. It is a little play in which you shall be the star,

my Ruby; a diverting little drama in which your emotional talents will display themselves to great effect."

He grew serious.

"You will meet Mr. Jesson and you will say to him (at a favorable moment to be selected by your intelligence) 'Mr. Jesson, I have here $5,000 in gold coin.' You will show him the pretty little pieces, for the actual sight of gold exerts upon most men, Ruby, a direct and peculiar fascination. You will say, 'I have been asked to present this money to you as an evidence of good will on the part of a friend for whom you can do a great service, a service which, at the same time, will be of even greater benefit to the Union Pacific Railroad.' And you will produce a draft upon the Chemical National Bank of New York, a draft for $10,000 which you will also show to our handsome friend, telling him that it represents a second present to be placed in his hands upon the completion of the service required. And then you will inform him that, subsequently, if all goes well, he will receive another draft, this time for $20,000. I think you will be able to interest Mr. Jesson, Ruby."

The girl sat silent, thoughtful.

"I see," she said finally. "Jesson is to be sent out in Marsh's last hope to find a pass through the Black Hills. But he will not find the pass. As a reward for his bad eyesight he is to receive, in three payments, $35,000. That about states it, doesn't it?"

"With the most admirable precision," agreed Deroux. "Five thousand to enlist his interest. Ten thousand as a reward when he returns from the Black Hills with the news that the pass does not exist. And, finally, twenty thousand when the road is completed through my lands. I believe in doing things in a big way, Ruby."

"Yes, I see you do," said the girl. "That's a lot of money, Joe. But I don't know. Suppose something went wrong. If you care to call things by their right names this is bribery. What's more, you're tampering with a Government job, Joe. The Government is as much interested in this road as if the Army was building it."

"Nothing can go wrong," said Deroux, confidently. "Win Jesson for me and the game is won."

"Ordinarily I would turn you down," said Ruby. "I'm no angel, but I haven't much use for crooks. There's a chance this isn't as crooked as it looks. Hell! I don't care anyway. I'll tell you straight, Joe, I want money and want it bad. I'm sick of this hell hole of Haller's. I'd almost commit murder to get enough money to get out of it. I want to get back East and lead a decent life, get married, maybe, and have children. I wouldn't make a bad mother, Joe. I've seen enough bad ones to know what a good one should be.

"Then again, I like this man Jesson. I like the way he holds himself above these pigs out here. He has class. His being engaged doesn't

count. I've watched him and I've watched the girl. I know my own sex, Joe, and I know a little about yours. They aren't in love with each other. They are just in the habit of being engaged. She has never felt love—doesn't know any more about it than a baby—that girl, and as for him, I don't know, playing a game, I reckon. Joe, you're on. You have always been straight with me and I'll play your game for you, to the limit!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE TEMPTING OF MR. PETER JESSON

The strident night song of North Platte had died away to a murmur when Jesson finished working over his maps. The bursts of wild merriment from The Arabian Nights had long since quieted. The night birds had gone to roost. The main street of the town was in darkness, relieved only by the flickering oil lanterns, hung upon widely-separated poles.

Jesson went to the window and peered into the blackness. There had been a flurry of snow and the wind had left patches upon the rutted street and the plank sidewalks. It was cold, with a chill which crept into the big bare room. He turned back to the stove and fed the fire. He was in no mood to sleep. Restlessness plucked at his nerves.

Things were in a devil of a mess. He despised the place and the people. A population of boors in a wilderness utterly barren of the ordinary decencies of life. He thought of the months he had compelled himself to endure the society of men he would not have tolerated in New York. And these damned roughs held themselves to be as good or better than he! He yearned for New York as he had never yearned for anything in his life—for its orderly exist-

ence, its regulated scheme of life, its comforts and luxuries. He thought of his clubs, comparing the wretched street of this wretched hamlet with the majestic march of Fifth Avenue.

What was the good of it, this miserable exile among savages? What was he getting out of it all? Was it worth while to submit to such daily discomfort of mind and body merely for the sake of winning a possible fortune? He was beginning to think himself a complete fool. Much better to have remained in New York and taken his chance along pleasanter avenues of ambition. Something would have turned up. There were girls with money, more money than Miriam was likely to have, the way things were going. His mind evaded the conclusion but he was beginning to suspect that the girl's attraction for him had palled.

Now, that girl he had seen talking to Deroux and later that he had observed in Haller's—there was a slip of femininity to rouse a fellow's blood. What a fiery little devil she was, this Ruby! Sinuous, provocative, eyes that lured and dared in the same slow glance! And a beauty if he was a judge! Thoroughbred in the girl, somewhere, however she derived the strain. Small head like a racehorse, skin like pink flushed marble, a figure for a sculptor. He wondered who she was, where she came from. Could it be possible for such a girl, a dance hall girl, to keep straight? Was Deroux telling the truth?

"What possible difference could it make to

me, one way or the other?" he asked himself in irritation.

Nevertheless his thoughts kept returning to Ruby. Pictures of the girl passed through his mind—her catlike grace as she boxed the ears of the laughing Deroux; her fierce eyes, darting sparks of rage as she leaped back from the ugly brute in Haller's and shot to kill; her red, scornful mouth; the whole fascinating figure of her. Yes, he would take the trouble to make the acquaintance of this girl! He had yet to see the woman he could not interest when he set about the task. Then his eyes fell upon an open letter from his father's old friend and legal adviser, Charles Carter, and he cursed softly. He picked it up from the table and read the paragraph which had spoiled the day for him:

"And I tell you frankly, Mr. Jesson, there is no other way. Dempsey threatens to make the whole thing public unless you pay him the ten thousand for which he holds your note of hand. He is a shrewd fellow but very vindictive. If he can't get his money he will not hesitate to ruin you. He will brand you, he tells me, as a welsher in every club in New York. I do not need to point out what that would mean. I do not like to remind you of advice ignored, but you will remember that I cautioned you against your inclination to gamble far beyond your means.

"Dempsey's ultimatum is that you must pay the note within three months from this date or suffer the consequences. I have no other re-

course than to advise you to find the money. For your father's sake I would aid you if it were possible. Unfortunately, it is not possible. All of my resources are engaged for a long time to come. You must find the money yourself. Surely, with your present connections, you should be able to raise $10,000 within the next quarter."

"The damned blackleg!" said Jesson, aloud. "I swear I think I was bilked in his cursed establishment! But what's the use? Carter is right. The note has got to be paid, though the devil himself knows how!"

He sank into a black reverie. He might as well be called upon to raise a million in three months as ten thousand. He knew that not one of the old set back in town would be likely to let him have that amount. The thought knifed him that not one of them trusted him enough for that. Marsh? Out of the question. Marsh was one of those damned Scotchmen who always wanted explanations. This thing wouldn't stand explaining. He shivered. The fire had gone out in the stove and the room was like a tomb. Arising, he shook himself, got himself into his fur coat. He turned down and blew out the lamp flame.

With his left arm clutching a portfolio of reports, he threw open the door, stepping out upon the slippery sidewalk. He was turning to insert the key when a small and rapidly moving figure violently collided with him in the darkness. He heard a sharp cry of pain and whirled

about to find a girl, swathed in furs, at his feet. He stooped and raised her, holding her tightly to him.

"It's my ankle," she said with a catch in her voice. "I have wrenched it, I'm afraid. I am terribly sorry, but I doubt if I can use it. You may have to help me to my boarding house. It isn't far."

She lay within his arm, her face tilted back, her lips near his. Jesson felt the blood leaping through his veins. He knew that voice with its drawl. Even in the poor light he recognized the charming, impudent face. He held her even closer and she seemed to nestle more firmly against his protecting arm.

"It was entirely my fault," he told her. "I should have looked about me instead of backing blindly from the doorway. I am inexpressibly sorry to have been the cause of your accident. Won't you let me carry you?"

"I'm not a featherweight," said the girl. "If you care to try I would be grateful."

Jesson stuffed his papers into his pocket and swung the girl gently into his arms. Thus they made their way to her home, no great distance. Nothing more was said until they reached the doorway. She gave the key to Jesson.

"You must come in," she invited. "Let me offer you something, champagne perhaps. I have some very good wine."

"You are very kind. I shall be delighted," he said.

He carried her to her room and placed her upon a couch. Kneeling, he undid her shoe, noting that her feet were small and well shaped. Then he made a discovery which puzzled him. His experience with sprained ankles had not been extensive but he was perfectly sure that a sprained ankle swelled quickly. There was no swelling here. The shapely ankle he held upon his knee, white, blue-veined and beautifully slender, showed no evidence whatever of enlargement. Suddenly enlightenment, a hint of the truth, came to him and he bent his head to hide a smile. Playing out the little comedy he bathed foot and ankle and presently bound them tightly with a bandage. Then he arose and at her direction found the champagne, opened it skillfully and filled two glasses. He placed a footstool and carried her to an easy chair, where they sat knee to knee.

"Now we are all comfy," he said, "that is, if your ankle does not pain too much?"

"It is much better, Mr. Jesson," said the girl. "You are really a wonderful surgeon and nurse."

"You know my name?"

"Of course," laughed the girl, "just as you know mine, don't you? Admit it."

"Well, then, yes," said Jesson. "I will confess that I asked Mr. Deroux who you were. He obliged, saying some very pleasant things about you, Miss Kenny."

"Oh, Joe's a pretty good friend of mine,

though I am afraid of him sometimes when he gets in one of his wild moods. He just about rules the roost in this country."

"So I have gathered," said Jesson, "but, after all, I can think of a more interesting topic than Mr. Deroux."

"And that is—?"

"Your very lovely self," said Jesson. "You are really quite adorable, do you know it? If you will forgive my inquisitiveness, I want to know all about you. How on earth did such a girl as you ever come to be in this place?"

And Ruby told him. Genuinely pleased at his obvious interest she told him as much of her story as she thought advisable, of the death of her father, her poverty, her need for money, her accidental meeting with Jed Haller and of the strictly business arrangement she had made with the ponderous Judge. Jesson listened with warming interest. His hand found hers and she made no movement to withdraw it. His knee pressed against her soft knee and the touch thrilled him. His admiring gaze was fixed upon her piquant face or upon the graceful contours of her slender, rounded figure. They drank their champagne as they talked in this swift intimacy, Ruby merely sipping at her bubbling glass, Jesson emptying his rather frequently. He had opened another bottle. He longed to sweep her into his arms, to crush her to him, to kiss those scornful lips.

"You are rather a darling," said Ruby, reading what lay in Jesson's eyes. "I think I'll

break a lifetime rule and make a confession myself. I liked you when I first saw you and that was the day after you arrived in North Platte."

She bent forward a little and ran her white fingers through Jesson's hair, her ardent gaze melting into his. He caught her to him. She threw back her head. Their lips met. Jesson felt her body trembling and held her even closer.

"I love you! Ruby, I love you!" he breathed. "You are the most wonderful girl I ever saw! You have called to me from the moment my eyes fell upon you. I couldn't understand it. But I know now. It's love, you adorable girl."

She kissed him again, her heart in her clinging lips, then gently withdrew from his arms.

"I want you to believe me," she said, "when I tell you that you are the first man who has kissed me since I was a schoolgirl. Many men have tried it but have been discouraged. It's pretty hard to believe that of a dance-hall girl, isn't it?"

"Not of you," said Jesson. "I know it's true."

"It is," she said. "I have hated men until now. Now—I don't know. Perhaps it is love. We must wait and see. We will be together in Julesburg when the road moves on. But I forgot. You are engaged to Miss Marsh."

"That does not matter," said Jesson. "Miss Marsh would not be inconsolable. Give me a little time. It's not being engaged that worries me."

"What is it, then?" asked the girl.

"In a word, money," said Jesson. "Debts enough to stagger a man."

"Tell me. Perhaps there is a way."

She listened intently as he told her of the life he had led in New York, of the bitterness of trying to keep up appearances, of his luckless gambling and of the pit of debt into which it had led him—that and the threat of exposure hanging over him.

"Peter," she said, "please go to that bureau. Here is the key. Open the top drawer and bring me what you find under the clothes in the corner."

He obeyed, wondering.

"Why, it's money, gold from the weight of it," he said as he brought her one of the heavy little bags that nested in the bureau drawer.

"Yes, it's gold, gold coin," said Ruby. "There's five thousand there, Peter. It's yours."

Jesson looked at her in amazement.

"Mine? What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. A good friend of mine, and of yours, sent this money here to-night. It is for you alone. It is an evidence of his confidence in you, the first evidence."

"But what's it all about? Why should anybody ask you to give me $5,000?"

"Peter, here's the truth. I did not sprain my ankle to-night. It was a trick, a way to make your acquaintance, to hold you for a time. But wait! Believe me, I did it gladly. I wanted to know you! It was determined sooner or later

to meet you. This man's scheme fell in with my own desires. You do believe me?"

He looked at her steadily, then put his arm around her and drew her to him, kissing her over and over again.

"That's my answer," he said.

"It is Deroux," she went on. "No, don't look so fierce. There's nothing between Joe and me, never has been or could be. But Joe wants the road built through his land, through Smoky River. It will mean, oh, I don't know how much to him! Millions, probably. He says that it will be the best thing for the road and for the country. Peter, he doesn't want you to find a pass through the Black Hills!"

Jesson looked at her whitely. She drew from her bosom a draft, made out to Peter Jesson for $10,000, and placed it in his hand.

"That will be ready for you when you tell Marsh there is no pass—that the road will have to turn south," she added. "And, Peter, when the road is built, Deroux will give you $20,000 more. He keeps his word, Deroux, to friend or enemy. Isn't that a stake worth playing for?"

Jesson got to his feet, unsteadily. His face was drawn. He swayed a little, though not from the wine he had drunk. Ruby lifted herself to his arms and clung to him, her lips seeking his.

"You must, Peter. Think of what it will mean for you! Me, if you want me! You can't say—no."

He held her close for a long time. Then his face changed. He laughed.

"Ruby," he said. "You can tell our friend Deroux that I will play his game. I don't believe there is any pass, so he may be throwing away his money. But I'll do what he wants. I have always wondered what my price would be. Well, it's fairly high. Fifteen thousand, anyway, thirty-five probably."

He crushed her to him again, afire with the touch of her.

"You adorable little devil," he whispered in her ear.

A William Fox Production. *The Iron Horse.*

"GIN'RAL, DON'T YE RAYMIMBER CORP'RAL CASEY WHO STOLE THAT CHICKEN FER YER DINNER?"

CHAPTER XVII

DAVY RIDES FOR HIS LIFE

Marsh met Deroux face to face the next morning outside the hotel.

"If you are not doing anything in particular, why not come with me to the end of track?" the Superintendent invited.

"That would please me very much," said Deroux.

"It might interest you," Marsh replied. "I'm taking my car out on an inspection trip. My daughter and Mr. Jesson are accompanying me. We'll dine on the road and I promise you a good cigar."

They walked to the station where the train waited, the private car attached to two flatcars loaded with rails and other equipment just received from the East. After the special train got under way, and was puffing along at its usual gait of twenty miles an hour, Marsh retired to his room, leaving Miriam with Jesson and the affable Deroux. The Frenchman entertained them for an hour with tales of his many-sided career, tales which ranged from his schooling in Paris in the hey-day of the Second Empire to the rough life of gold-miner and horse breeder in the Smoky Hill wilderness.

After Miriam left the two together, Deroux turned instantly to Jesson, his eyes snapping.

"Mr. Jesson," he said, in a low tone, inaudible outside the drawing room of the car, "I know what Ruby offered you last night. I sent her to you. She told me early this morning that you had promised to stand with me. You are smart. I, Joe Deroux, tell you that you are wise. I will make you rich. What you already have and what you will later receive is merely a sample of the generosity of Deroux.

"This road will not go through the Black Hills, Mr. Jesson! I tell you, man to man, that I will block it! Nothing shall stop me, nothing! I shall fight and I have allies that nobody knows about. Very well. Let us understand each other. *There is no pass!* You will so report. And your reward will be—enough even for your necessities. But I demand utter loyalty! The man doesn't live who can play fast and loose with me. From now on your services are mine. That is understood?"

"Perfectly," said Jesson, calmly. "I'll go as far as you like, short of man-killing."

Deroux eyed him speculatively.

"Who knows what you would do, my friend, if the impulse was strong enough? I have made a little study of you, Mr. Jesson. I have detected, I think, surprising possibilities in your character."

Jesson started, about to reply, when the whistle of the locomotive dinned their ears with its unbroken, persistent shriek. Marsh dashed

into the car, Miriam at his heels. They ran to the windows but whatever it was that had caused the engineer to hang on to the cord was too far in advance of the train for them to see.

"Stay in the car!" Marsh shouted to his daughter as he ran forward to the open flat-cars, followed by Jesson and Deroux. With nothing to block vision they were able to see miles ahead over the rolling prairie. Off to the southwest was a bobbing dot, rapidly growing larger. Following closely, less than a furlong behind, were other bobbing figures, a dozen, strung out in an irregular line. The dots quickly changed into men and horses, racing at top speed. Jesson happened to notice Deroux's face. It startled him. Every trace of amiability and polish was gone. Savagery shown in the staring eyes.

"One white man—eight, ten, yes, twelve, Indians, Sioux warriors," cried Deroux. 'They're gaining. By God! They'll get him!"

He turned and saw Jesson watching him curiously. Instantly he changed voice and expression.

"He can ride, that man! Watch him! See how he helps his horse! It's tired, staggering with fatigue, but he lifts it along! He's a damned good shot, too!"

The foremost pursuer had ventured too close to the hard pressed fugitive. The young man—Marsh could make him out clearly through his field glasses—turned in his saddle and threw a shot backward. The Sioux leader slumped in

his saddle, then slid to the ground. The wind brought them the sound of fierce whooping. They saw the Indians quirting their ponies, stinging them to greater speed.

The rider was evidently making for the train whose smoke he must have spotted long before. He was driving his horse in a long slant which, at the rate of speed being made by train and horse, should bring him up in less than five minutes. Marsh hurried forward to order the engineer to slow down, but his authority was not needed. Pat Casey, jumping with excitement and already shouting directions and advice to a man at least two miles distant, had attended to that detail. The train slackened speed to about ten miles an hour and the rider almost immediately changed his course, coming toward them more directly.

Nearer and nearer he sped, his horse laboring, the Indians gaining steadily; now within easy arrow shot. The men on the flat cars were yelling and firing their rifles but scoring no hits. The interval swiftly narrowed, until the rider was within a hundred yards of the train but considerably ahead of it, as he had undoubtedly planned. Then an arrow or a bullet ended the race for the gallant horse. It stumbled, recovered with a staggering effort, stumbled again and went down in a heap, throwing the rider half a dozen yards ahead of it.

"Good God! He's done for!" shouted Marsh, and a groan went up all along the crowded

flat cars. Miriam, at the window of the private car, clinched her fists until the nails cut the palms of her hands, breathing a prayer for the boy in such deadly peril. Then she forgot to pray. From the fallen horse he was up at a bound, leaping forward like an arrow from a bow. She had not believed it possible for a human being to run as fast as that boy ran. Quartering toward the train, he came almost straight toward her. She caught glimpses of his face and could not believe she saw aright. He was smiling, actually smiling, as he leaped forward like an antelope with the ponies of the yelling Sioux not fifty yards behind and as arrow after arrow flashed past or over his bounding figure. A few armed with rifles shot as rapidly as they could reload upon their running ponies. The boy ran low, head down, dodging from side to side but without losing much distance. And always as he ran he smiled as if his race with death was the greatest sport in the world. He swerved from the line of Miriam's vision, but Marsh, Jesson, Deroux, the temporarily deranged Casey and all of the rest of the wildly-excited crowd on the flat cars saw him lunge forward in a desperate leap for the hand-rail of the rear platform of the private car, saw him clutch it, cling fast and swing himself to safety.

Before Miriam could turn from the window the rear door of the car was flung open and a tall youth with gay excitement sparkling in

eyes as blue as the Nebraska sky came at her like a whirlwind, seized her by the shoulders and pressed her knees to the floor.

"Down—get down below the window level!" he shouted. "They're riding right along with the train shooting their little bows and arrows. Keep down—only a few minutes—we'll run away from 'em."

All at once they found themselves looking into each other's eyes, and Miriam discovered that she was clinging to this surprising young man's hand and that his right arm was very firmly attached to her waist. The curious discovery did not provoke her to any immediate or hasty movement. It was a nice hand, big, hard, but warm and comforting; and the arm around her felt extremely satisfying, delightfully protective.

It was the young man who first withdrew from the intimate group that circumstances had formed. He slowly removed his hand, regretfully, it seemed, and then his arm. He looked again into the big purple eyes, and lifted the girl from the floor.

" 'Fraid I startled you," he said, with absolutely the most attractive smile that Miriam had ever seen upon a man's face, a smile with a funny little quirk in each corner. What was there about that smile that seemed curiously familiar?

"You see, I hadn't time, really, to announce myself, even if I had known that there was a lady in the car. Think of it, a train, a car—out

here! You see those red gentlemen we have just parted from had an idea they wanted a sample of my hair, just a little keepsake to hang in a lodge. They are persistent in notions of that kind. It didn't suit me at all. So I fooled 'em."

"I think you are wonderful!" said Miriam, and looked every word of it. Her big eyes were bright with admiration. "I didn't know that anything except a deer could run as fast as you ran after your horse fell."

"Well, you see I learned to sprint while running races with Indians, relatives of the hair-collectors back there, but a pretty good lot. I have had a lot of practice in hundred-yard dashes. I had a good start and knew I could keep ahead for a minute or two. What I was really afraid of was, after poor old Star got his, that I'd get punctured by an arrow before I could make the train. The Sioux are wizards with the bow but about the worst shots in the world with a rifle."

"How on earth did you come to be out here?" the girl asked.

"I was looking for you—not you personally, of course (again the flashing smile), but the railroad, hoping to strike a construction train somewhere along the line. And here I am."

"Yes, but—"

Marsh came in, with Jesson and Deroux at his heels.

"Young man, you certainly got through by the skin of your teeth," he said. "For about

five minutes I wouldn't have given a short bit for your chance of winning out. My name's Marsh. I'm superintendent of the road. This is my daughter Miriam, and these gentlemen—"

"Miriam!" cried the young man, "not Miriam Marsh?" He sprang to the girl and caught her hands, holding her from him, studying her lovely face.

"It is! Of course! Don't you remember me? Davy Brandon of Springfield?" He tore open the top button of his buckskin hunting shirt and showed a polished coin that hung from his neck by a thong.

"Miriam! Do you see? The Black Hawk medal that Lincoln gave us. I've always kept it. It's been around my neck ever since I was a kid."

He kept her hands, drinking the pleasure of her face. Miriam with a swift movement reached upward and kissed him.

"There!" she said. "That proves how glad I am, Davy! I can't believe it's true. And yet the very moment you dashed into the car I felt, somehow, as if I had seen you before—the queerest feeling!"

Jesson and Deroux had withdrawn a little to one side, Jesson with a scowl, Deroux with a smile of detached amusement. Yet his eyes were unsmiling. One watching him keenly might have supposed that he had formed an immediate dislike for the newcomer who had fairly exploded into their little group. As for Jesson, distaste was written plainly upon his

countenance. Fresh from love making with Ruby Kenny, aware of a passion for the dance-hall girl who now filled his thoughts, perfectly conscious that he was not in love with Miriam, it angered him, nevertheless, to see another man, especially a young and obviously attractive man, play the hero in her sight. And he had not missed the look in their eyes as they stood close together when he entered the car, or the kiss she had so impulsively offered.

"Well, well, Davy," said Thomas Marsh. "This is quite the most remarkable meeting of old friends I ever heard about. Think of it! We lose sight of you for fifteen years and then you pop out of nowhere one jump ahead of Indians and leap squarely among us. You can't beat that in the novels."

"It was magnificent!" cried the Frenchman. "I could not believe my eyes as I saw this young man actually out-speeding Sioux horsemen. I congratulate you!"

"Mr. Deroux," said Marsh, "this is Davy Brandon, a very old friend from my home town in Illinois. Mr. Jesson, my chief engineer, Davy."

Davy shook hands. Jesson gave him a limp greeting, and turned a shoulder. Deroux, extending his left hand, gripped hard, black eyes staring into Davy's blue. Something far back in the young man's mind stirred uneasily, then settled again into the obscurity of the forgotten. Yet Davy was conscious of a strange thrill as he met Deroux's bold gaze, something which

sent a cold chill up his back. It puzzled him. He continued to stare. Marsh noticed it.

"Perhaps you and Deroux may have run across each other somewhere in this country, Davy," he suggested.

"No," said Davy, slowly. "I don't think so."

"No," said Deroux in his positive way. "I never forget a man."

"Where is your father, Davy?" Marsh asked.

"Dead," said Davy. "Dead these fifteen years, Mr. Marsh. Killed on the trail out here —murdered by a renegade white man who led a band of Cheyennes. Dad hid me behind a log and they missed me in their haste. Spence, the scout, came along and found me. Then I went to school in Sacramento and grew up there until I rejoined Spence. For the past few years I have been with him all through the mountain country, trapping and scouting, with the Oglallas most of the time. That about covers my history."

Miriam, who was standing where she could not help seeing Deroux's face, was puzzled by its expression. As Davy talked it seemed to her that a mask dropped, the mask of hearty amiability that Deroux customarily showed. He had turned aside, toward the window, through which he gazed with savage eyes. She had never seen such a look of utter ferocity. It frightened her. She thought to herself, "this man does not like David Brandon. Why?" Her perception was all the keener, perhaps,

because of Jesson's coolness toward Davy. That annoyed her, but she put it down to characteristic jealousy. But this other thing was different. Jesson's face expressed dislike, the dislike that one man often feels instantly, unaccountably, toward another man. Deroux's face revealed hatred and something else she could not quite fathom. Had it been any other than this bold Frenchman of famous courage she would have said that fear peered from those black eyes. But that was impossible. As a matter of fact, why should Deroux either hate or fear this young man who amounted to nothing in his life? She compelled herself to think that she was too imaginative, overwrought, and turned toward her father and her girlhood playmate.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRICE OF A GENTLEMAN

Rolling back to North Platte in the late evening, Miriam and Davy talked of the old days in Springfield, the days when they had been like brother and sister. Both were oddly conscious of change. Miriam did not try to analyze the feeling, but her woman's instinct told her that the emotion which stirred her heart as she knelt in the strong protection of Davy Brandon's encircling arm was something Jesson had never been able to arouse.

It was disturbing. Being a natural, human girl, she was not at all averse to the admiration of good-looking young men, and, though by no means a coquette, was not unskilled in the gentle art of harmless flirtation. But this was something which made her heart throb, which filled her with a soft, warm glow, which, curiously, both excited and puzzled her. As she looked at Davy she was conscious of her flushed cheeks. It was difficult not to look at him. She felt a curious pride, as though she had acquired a possessive right to this fine figure of a man.

"He is absolutely the most attractive man I have ever seen," she thought. "If he weren't so strong and self-reliant, he would be almost too good-looking."

At twenty-five Davy Brandon challenged the glance of any man and the gaze of any woman. Flat-footed in his Oglalla moccasins, he stood six feet and one inch, straight as the sons of Mata-Tatonka. Thick brown hair, curling a little, covered his well-shaped head with its thinker's forehead. His eyes were deep blue and very serious, though they could smile as intriguingly as his lips. His nose was straight and regular, not too slender for the strong mouth beneath. It was the mouth which somehow captured the glance. It was large but well modeled, and there was a delightfully whimsical twist to the corners whenever Davy was amused. When it shaped for laughter it was even more attractive with its flash of the straight, white teeth. There was strength in that face, strength and determination, as well as the reflection of a clean heart and unsullied mind. There was good humor in it. Miriam was an observing little person.

"He could be very stern," she thought.

Against her will she found herself comparing Davy and Jesson. They were both big men, with Davy a shade the taller, Jesson a trifle the heavier. They were both good to look at, but Davy's was the tanned and tempered beauty of the open, while Jesson's was the softer comeliness of the settled places. Jesson, the older by half a dozen years, displayed the cool poise of his class and breeding, while Davy with his quick, enthusiastic speech, his flashing smile, his lightning-like movements, was like a fresh

breeze from distant mountains. Again annoyed at herself, yet perfectly conscious of a secret elation, Miriam decided that Davy was the better looking.

Then she tried to put all such thoughts behind her, tried again to resume the sisterly attitude of the old days. She told herself that she had no right to cherish any other emotion. She had promised herself to Peter Jesson, loyal to her through all the years of waiting. It simply would not do to think much of this splendid-looking youth who had leaped into her life at a bound after the separation of fifteen years. She caught Jesson's look across the table and smiled at him, trying to make it affectionate, wondering if she had done so. For some strange reason she was less sure of herself than ever before.

Marsh and Deroux, over their cigars and wine, were talking of the railroad, and Davy, despite his burning interest in the girl at his side, listened intently. Already he had heard the story of the road, from the very first days, the dramatic tale of its trials and struggles as it dauntlessly drove westward. He had made up his mind to ask Marsh for a job—anything at which Marsh thought he might be useful—to give him a part in the work as his father would have wanted. His father's face came back to him, eyes illuminated with that mystic belief in the future which held him to the hour of his death. Davy was silent, almost forgetting Miriam, falling into a reverie. Marsh was talking about his vital problem. Presently Davy

caught a few words that broke the spell of the past.

"I think I shall ask Mr. Jesson to start tomorrow for the Black Hills," he was saying. "A week's survey should settle the matter one way or the other."

"As you will, my friend," Davy heard Deroux reply in his heavy, resonant voice. "I shall gladly wait. Mr. Jesson is sure to be disappointed, unfortunately. The only straight line over the Black Hills is the one the eagles take."

"It may be so," returned Marsh, "but we will have one last try at it." He leaned across the table to Davy.

"Brandon, how well do you know this country, the Black Hills region just east of Laramie?"

"Pretty well," said Davy, with quick interest. "I have hunted through it for years with my Oglalla friends."

"Do you think we can build through the hills? Do you know of any practical line, any pass? You used to play at being a surveyor, Davy."

Brandon sat gazing at the wall opposite, his face stern-set, his eyes cloudy with recollection. Presently, he replied, very quietly:

"Something has come back to me, Mr. Marsh."

He stopped, collecting his thoughts. Miriam noticed that Deroux was watching Davy like a great cat, with unblinking intentness.

"It was in the Black Hills, near Lodge Pole Creek, that dad was killed," he went on. "It

was the night of the very day that dad's dream came true. He had been following a ridge, a broad 'hogback' which led us, without a break, for many miles up from the plains. In the late afternoon it began to descend gradually and we saw the mountains ahead of us, cutting across our trail like a wall. Dad thought for awhile that we were blocked. Then we saw that the mountain wall was cut straight through by a ravine, the gorge into which our ridge trail was slowly descending. I shall never forget dad! I thought he would go crazy from joy. You know how he felt about the road, his belief in it. Well, there was the pass he'd dreamed about!"

If Davy had fired his six-shooter he could not have created more excitement. Marsh pushed his chair back and got to his feet. Deroux's big hands were working and the mask of good nature was slipping from his face. Miriam saw the tiger look creep into it. Jesson, fidgeting in his chair, was smiling scornfully. Marsh broke the throbbing silence.

"Davy!" he cried. "Are you sure? Can you find that pass? It's been fifteen years! You were a mere child!"

"Fairly sure," said Brandon, quietly. "I have always had a good sense of location, and with the Oglallas I had a chance to train myself to remember landmarks. I recall the general lay of the country around the Lodge Pole, and that pass I never could forget! There's a great tree, the only tree for a mile, I think, right in the gorge and up against the west wall of the

cut. Oh, it's there, right enough, and if I can't find it my Oglalla friends can. They have known about it for ages. Old Meta-Seela, the head medicine man of Bull Bear's band, calls it the Road of the Thunderbird. An Indian was killed by lightning somewhere along the high ridge and they never forget such things."

"Will you locate it for me?" asked Marsh. "Will you guide Mr. Jesson? Davy, it means everything to the railroad! If you succeed you'll find us grateful."

"Certainly I will go," said Davy, eagerly. "It's what dad would have wanted. It was his pass. It's my great ambition, Mr. Marsh, to do something to help the road. I owe that to my father. If I can be of real help it will be like raising a monument to his memory. Think of it, Mr. Marsh! If the road goes through there, through the pass that dad found, the iron horse will pass within saluting distance of where he lies in the grave that I dug with my own hands."

Miriam impulsively caught his hand in hers. She was conscious of a perfectly wild desire to throw her arms around him and hold him to her. Her cheeks flamed suddenly. Deroux's voice broke in like the snarl of an animal at bay.

"There's no such pass! I know that country well!"

Davy straightened, then leaned toward the Frenchman, eyes frosty.

"Mr. Deroux," he said, in a low voice that leveled menace at the dark face across the table,

"I'm not arguing with you, I'm telling you! The pass is just where I said it was!"

Miriam thrilled at the tension. She saw Deroux's face relax in one of those swift changes of mask at which he was so adept. Rage was wiped out in a flash. Craft crept into the bold eyes. Easy amiability smoothed out the distorted features. Deroux spoke with more than a trace of condescension.

"Oh, I am not doubting your word, my impetuous young friend! I am merely intimating that you are mistaken. As Mr. Marsh suggests, you were only a small boy. It is a baffling country—a land of distorted images, mirages. I have myself hunted through it, very thoroughly. I have never heard of the pass you speak of."

Davy remained silent, mouth set, eyes still fixed on Deroux, holding the man with a strange expression, as if he were struggling with something which eluded him, tortured him.

"At all events," said Marsh, "it's worth investigating. Jesson was going, anyway, and Brandon, here, can go with him as guide. We have everything to win, nothing to lose, after all. I'll have your horses and equipment at end of track early enough for a good start. We'll see you off, eh, Miriam?"

Miriam smiled quick approval.

"As you will," agreed Deroux, easily.

For the rest of the journey, Marsh, Jesson and Davy studied the topographical maps of the region, Marsh pointing out the line most desirable to follow, Davy roughly identifying the

location of his father's pass. Deroux, again good natured and brimful of joviality, entertained Miriam, his big laugh rising now and then, for he invariably laughed louder than anybody else at his own jests.

At North Platte, after the car had been detached and switched to its siding, Miriam said good night and went to her room, though it was hours before sleep came. There was much to puzzle over. The warmth of heart that had come to her, her engagement to Peter Jesson, her duty—plain enough, but difficult to follow; the obvious antagonism between Davy and Deroux, antagonism and something more, for sheer hatred had blazed in Deroux's eyes at least twice. And upon Davy's face had been a very curious expression, as if he were desperately trying to recall something.

"Feel like turning in?" asked Deroux of Jesson, as he was about to say good night.

"No," said Jesson. "It's a bit early. My New York habits cling to me out here. It's morning that finds me sleepy."

"Let's stroll up town," suggested Deroux. "We might drop into Haller's and take a little whirl at the wheel. I feel lucky."

"Don't wade in too deep," laughed Marsh. "That wheel of Haller's is too much for me."

Jesson and Deroux made their way slowly up the dim-lighted street and into The Arabian Nights, thronged as always at this time of night, with a hundred men drinking at the long bar under the eye of the fat Judge and the lanky

shotgun guards, the tables surrounded with men hot in the fever of gambling, and the dance floor packed with dancers flushed with exercise and drink. Ruby saw them and deserted a big Texan who had succumbed to her charms, a cattleman from the Panhandle who had made a deal with the railroad and was awaiting the arrival of the herds that were being driven toward the line, an eight-hundred-mile journey.

With her unhurried, undulating grace she flowed like a brook in the moonlight through the restless crowd in Haller's, greeting Deroux with her usual air of impudence, then Jesson, shyly. Deroux saw the glance that passed between them and smiled in satisfaction. The three withdrew to a small table, where Deroux, as always when women were with him, ordered champagne.

"You're wasting your money, Joe," said Ruby. "The bottled sunshine is not for little Ruby to-night. One bubble, and I'd shoot up the place!"

She brought her chair close to Jesson's, and leaned a little toward him, their knees touching. Deroux studied them, laughing a little.

"You are a good-looking pair," he said. "You, my little Ruby, and you, my friend, Jesson. I drink to your health!"

He threw back his head and drained his glass.

The man from the Panhandle loomed over the table at Ruby's side. He dropped a hand

upon her bare shoulder and the girl flinched, almost falling into Jesson's arms.

"What were you doin', kiddin' me?" shouted the Texan, drunk and reckless with passion. "String me along all evening and then cut me for a damned tenderfoot!"

Jesson was starting to his feet when Deroux's voice cut in like a snapping whip.

"I'll settle this. Get out!"

The Texan lurched backward dragging at his heavy gun. All around the table the crowd broke, swaying toward the walls, dropping to the floor. Haller's great voice boomed a threat. Deroux, on his feet like a cat, legs wide apart, shoulders hunched forward, made one lightning movement, too fast for the eye to follow. The hall roared to the explosion of the heavy revolvers. The big Texan staggered backward, the red receding from his blank face, tottered and crashed down like a tree. Deroux, still crouched, waited briefly, then sheathed his gun. The hall still rang with the shrieks of the frightened women. Old Haller, making for the table, followed by his shotgun janizaries, was roaring curses. Deroux laughed. He leaned forward and patted Ruby's shoulder.

"They have very bad manners in Texas, my little Ruby," he said, tipping the bottle toward his glass. "Do not look so white. The man is not dead. I did not shoot to kill him—this time!"

The Judge bustled up.

"I won't have this gun play, Deroux!" he bellowed.

"*Mister* Deroux, Haller, when you take that tone!"

He never moved in his chair but he blazed a look at the bulky Judge which cooled the wrath of that individual, and Haller had plenty of nerve.

"Well, *Mister* Deroux, then, if you feel like bein' so fancy to an old friend. What the hell's the use of shootin' up the place? The two of you could have grabbed that fool!"

"Jed," said Deroux, "you walk right back to that dunce stool of yours and keep feeding your bad whiskey to those bums. This is my affair, do you understand? My affair! That man had bad manners. I will not tolerate bad manners. I could have killed him. I merely broke his right shoulder. Get him out of here!"

The Judge withdrew, grumbling about "law and order." His underlings helped the Texan to his feet and got him out of the place.

"Now forget it," said Deroux. "There's more important business on hand. This young Brandon has intruded himself into my business, into the business of Deroux! Into your business. Listen carefully. If he finds that pass—and I tell you now, the pass is there, I have known it all along—we are beaten. You, Jesson, lose $30,000 and our little Ruby loses—something that her heart is set upon. Let's face this thing. Take your choice. A life of poverty for both of you or ease and wealth

with each other. It's the luck of the devil that this Brandon has turned up. Jesson, you will have to deal with him. It should be easy. Accidents are common in this country. Brandon goes with you, but you come back alone!"

Jesson sat speechless, face very white, hands twitching. Suddenly Ruby bent toward him.

"Peter, listen to me. You must do what Deroux says. I won't let anything stand in the way of our happiness. I won't! I won't! I won't! All my life I have struggled to get something. I have gone straight. Now when the big chance comes, our chance, not even a man's life shall wreck it. What are lives worth in this country? I have seen twenty men killed. Brandon must not come back, Peter!"

CHAPTER XIX

MR. JESSON RETURNS

Davy brought the horses around to the private car as the sun was rising next morning. He had been up long before daylight, packing for a two weeks' trip, making sure that supplies and equipment were ready for their expedition.

He hailed the car with a gay whoop, as he sat his broncho, holding the reins of Jesson's horse looped over his left arm. The packhorse drowsed behind. Miriam opened the door of the car and ran toward him, her face bright with greeting. Davy swung off and took her hand.

"I won't be gone long, Miriam," he said, naïvely. "We can make Cheyenne easily in four days. Two more days will take us to the pass. I can go to it like a bird! Then back here!"

"Splendid, Davy!" cried Miriam. "I know you will succeed. It means everything to father, to the road."

"I know it," said Davy. "Why, Miriam, it's my big chance. I never dreamed that I could do so much for the road. It seems like something planned by Providence!"

"Perhaps it was, Davy," said Miriam.

They were holding each other with eyes that expressed more than they imagined when Jes-

son came out of the car followed by Marsh. The tall engineer scowled. Marsh started the echoes with a booming "Morning, Brandon! All ready, I see."

"All ready, Mr. Marsh."

Deroux appeared from the car and hailed the travelers from the platform:

"Behold, the great expedition is about to start," he cried, all affability. "I wish you luck, my friends!"

Jesson put his arm around Miriam and kissed her. Deroux's eyes sparkled with amusement. Davy, who had remounted his horse, turned away to hide the pain in his face. Deroux saw it all. Little escaped him.

"Look out for the Indians," he counselled. "It is a dangerous trail you are taking."

"Not much danger," said Marsh. "Major North's Pawnees have scouted the country nearly to Cheyenne. North reports that no hostiles have been seen."

"We'll move fast," said Davy.

The end of the day found them trail-weary, forty miles of hard riding behind them. There was little talk around the campfire. Each was aware of dislike for the other, Jesson taking little trouble to conceal his feelings. After a few efforts toward conversation, Davy accepted Jesson's attitude. It was the same next day and on the days that succeeded. They addressed each other only when absolutely necessary. Voluntarily, Davy did most of the camp work, cooking their meals, saddling and packing

the horses. He realized that Jesson had had no experience of that sort. He didn't need help. What angered him was his companion's superior air, his habit of speaking as if to a hired guide. Frequently Davy was on the point of flashing out a barbed reply, for his temper, ordinarily even, was set on a hairspring with such folk as Jesson. But he curbed himself, realizing it would not do to let his resentment flare into an open quarrel.

They trotted into the stage station of Julesburg on the morning of the third day. Already forehanded souls, aware of the intention to make the place railroad headquarters, were putting up shacks and sod dugouts, preparing to reap a share of the golden harvest spread by the road. The tatterdemalion population greeted the advance guard with noisy hilarity. Men crowded around them, bombarding them with questions, proffering alcoholic hospitality.

"No time to stop even, boys," said Brandon. "We're riding on. Headquarters will be here in two or three weeks. Get ready for the big boom."

Cheers followed them as they spurred their horses out of the straggling village and pressed forward to the foothills, looming straight ahead. Four nights later they camped on Lodge Pole Creek. Davy yearned to find his father's grave, but with Jesson present he choked down the desire. His memory of his father was too intimate to be expressed before any one he disliked. The next morning he said curtly:

"We are now following the ridge I told you about. You didn't notice how we approached it. Nobody would look for it here in this cut-up region of buttes and gorges. But wait. You'll see how true it runs."

A few hours later, Davy swung from his horse and motioned Jesson to do likewise. They had come to the bend in the ridge that he remembered. Dropping the reins over the heads of the horses, they walked forward along the rough crest falling away ahead of them.

"Now wait here," said Davy.

He ran forward, turned the out-jutting cliff and saw what he knew was in the distance—the great cleft in the mountain wall. He stood in thought. His father's voice came back to him, ringing with joy:

"Son, I've found it!"

His eyes dimmed. Poor old daddy! He shook emotion from him and walked back to the engineer.

"Come along, Mr. Jesson. I'll show you a gate ready for the road. You engineers couldn't want a better one."

Jesson's gaze traveled down the descending ridge to the tremendous rift in the distance. There was no doubting his eyes. Straight ahead, less than two miles away, the great pass invited. He had noted the character of the ridge, its easy ascent, its broadness, its gradual decline. He had enough practical experience to see that construction work would not be formidable. The rock work would be simple. One

long trestle over the gorge at their rear, then a sure approach to the ridge and easy escape to the plains through that stupendous pass. For a moment his professional instincts triumphed. It was like a miracle especially vouchsafed. A pretty problem with the solution absolutely guaranteed.

Then anger gripped him. This meant ruin: Deroux's scheme blown to the skies, his own hopes wrecked, a fortune snatched from his outstretched hand. It meant going back to worry, humiliation, wretched scheming; to sure exposure in New York and averted heads at the clubs. No, by God! It would be unendurable! Deroux's remark recurred to him:

"Who knows what you would do, my friend, if the impulse were strong enough!"

"We will have to investigate this," he said to Brandon. "It looks all right, but I must know more about the character of that gorge. We'll have to get down to the bottom."

They rode on down the ridge and into the mouth of the mountain gateway. Two hundred feet above their heads the walls towered on either side. Jesson's mind worked rapidly.

"Is there a way to the top of this cliff, I wonder?" he said aloud.

"We can try to find one," said Davy. "Why?"

"When I go back," said Jesson, "I want to know all there is to know. One of us should be let down that cliff to the left. We must know the exact character of the rock wall. It may

be rotten, it may be solid. It is our business to find out which."

"Why, that's solid rock," said Davy in surprise. "An earthquake couldn't loosen it."

"An engineer can take nothing for granted, Mr. Brandon," returned Jesson, coldly. "Suppose we neglected this important detail and later on a train was buried because of our neglect?"

"Why, I suppose you are right," said Davy. "It pays to make sure."

Jesson hid a smile of contempt. Any engineer would have laughed at the notion of danger from such a formation but this fellow could not be expected to know.

They rode through the gorge, for more than a mile, and turned south into a region broken by gullies. Leaving the horses, they struggled ahead on foot, slowly climbing upward. After hours of exhausting toil they made the top. Stretching themselves flat on the ground, they gazed down into the pass. Davy arose and knotted an end of his lariat around the trunk of a young pine. He arranged the rope in smooth loops, then proffered the other end to Jesson.

"All ready," he said.

Jesson drew back.

"I'm not used to this sort of thing," he said. "My hands are too soft from office work. That rope would tear them to pieces."

Davy shot him a look of undisguised contempt, a smile curling his mouth. He said noth-

ing but snatched the rope end from Jesson and quickly knotted it around his own waist. Then getting a firm grip a few feet from where the lariat was secured to the tree, he let himself easily over the edge of the cliff, bracing his feet against the rock and taking up the slack inch by inch as he lowered himself into the gulf. He saw that he would need every ounce of his strength. The strain was terrific. He had been too hard on Jesson. The man was out of training. He couldn't be expected to achieve such a venture. He called up cheerily:

"Going fine! Just keep your eye on the loops. See they don't snarl in the brush."

His voice grew fainter. Jesson peered forward. Brandon was already a hundred feet down the wall, clinging like a limpet, taking advantage of every knob and jutting elbow. He backed away from the edge, to the tree where the rope strained, twisting a little this way, a little that way, as the strain increased or lessened. For a moment he hesitated, white, shaken. He fumbled in Brandon's pack and found a small hatchet which he had seen Davy put there. He pounded the sharp edge of the hatchet against the rocks, dulling its fine edge. Again he paused, uncertain, fearful. Then, leaning heavily against the tree, he brought the edge of the hatchet down against the tight loop. He struck lightly. The blunted edge did not cut cleanly, but bruised the strands, gradually fraying them. Half a minute later—it seemed an hour to Jesson—several of the twisted

strands gave way. The rope writhed over the edge of the cliff like a snake. He heard a faint shout from below. He forced himself to look over the edge. He could make out nothing clearly, but he thought he saw a dark, disordered heap flung among the rocks and the bushes. He drew back, shuddering, hands and feet like ice. His impulse was to run, to get away from the place as swiftly as possible. But first he looked at the severed rope end. He satisfied himself that it would tell no tale of murder. The end dangling from the tree was frayed roughly, as if it had given way to strain. He made sure of this, then turned back, stumbling over the sharp rocks.

He found the horses, mounted and took the back trail. Night caught him on the ridge and he made camp after a fashion. Sleep he could not. All night long he sat by his fire, trying to banish the image of Brandon lying with broken body at the foot of that awful wall. He emptied a pint flask of brandy, responding to its warmth and the optimistic urge of alcohol. Well, it was done! He would be a damned fool to let conscience lash him. He was safe. No one could ever prove that he had cut the rope. His reward was sure. He would make Deroux pay high. Thirty thousand wasn't enough for this job. Nor twice thirty thousand. He would make better terms that night.

Dawn came and stirred him to action. He made coffee which he gulped down scalding hot. But he had little appetite. The desire to get

clear of the region scourged him. He drove the horses without mercy. Alone he made better time than he and Brandon had made together. He reached Cheyenne the next evening, rested and hurried on to Julesburg. In the bar he gave his version of Brandon's death. Inspired by brandy he told his story convincingly, making Davy a hero, keeping himself in the background, deliberately admitting that he had been afraid to tackle the descent and that Brandon had volunteered for the job. Nobody doubted him. Many sympathized. They expressed it by alcoholic hospitality and rough sympathy.

Four days later Jesson reached the end of track, left his horses to be sent on and took the construction train to North Platte. Entering the town he jogged the horses toward headquarters. Ruby, just leaving the Union Pacific Hotel, saw him as he trotted past. She started forward, then drew back to the doorway. She looked back down the street. Nobody followed. Jesson rode alone. Her throat tightened. She groped for the wall, weak, sick. But she conquered weakness by sheer will, straightened her shoulders and walked into the street.

"It's done and that's all there is to it," she said. "Brandon was nothing to me, nothing to anybody. He was in the way."

Exultation flushed her. The game was won. Her thoughts leaped forward. Deroux would pay. He kept his bargains. She would take Jesson out of this country, back East. They would have enough, with what she had saved,

and that was far more than anybody suspected. She would have happiness at last, the happiness she had dreamed of—that she had been almost willing to sell her soul for. Jesson was hers now and she thrilled at the thought. Every drop of blood in her body yearned for him. Her strong mind seized the situation and mastered it. A price had been paid, a terrible price, but the stake was worth it.

She passed swiftly down the street and entered The Arabian Nights. As she had guessed, Deroux was there, in a group of his men. She threw him a look and flitted into a back room. He followed presently.

"He's back!" she said laconically.

"Alone?"

"Alone," said Ruby.

Deroux left her abruptly and hastened from the place. He went straight to headquarters and walked in as Jesson was telling his story to Marsh. The superintendent's face was sad.

"Heard you were back," said Deroux. "Where's young Brandon?"

"I have just been telling Mr. Marsh," said Jesson. "Brandon is dead. I will tell you all about it later."

"That's bad," said Deroux. "He was a fine young man. And you found no pass, I take it?"

"There is no pass," said Jesson. "I made sure of that. It is an impossible region for a railroad."

"Oh, never mind the pass, now," said Marsh.

"I can't get that boy's face out of my mind. Years ago he was like my own son. When he joined us here, I felt the same way. I blame myself. If I hadn't sent him out this wouldn't have happened. I don't know how I am going to tell Miriam about this. It will break her all up. Well, it has to be done. I will see you tomorrow, Mr. Deroux. We are moving headquarters at once. The trains will be made up in the morning."

CHAPTER XX

"HELL ON WHEELS"

THE next day North Platte began to shrivel. Moving day had come to the doomed capital of the Union Pacific. Its portion was not the utter extinction which fell upon so many of the mad towns that punctuated the progress of the road, but it had played its part in the drama. It was to be abandoned and left, diminished, dark, silent.

That day and for many days, the shrinking town was bedlam. Five thousand human beings were demanding transportation to Julesburg, with their goods and livestock and the very houses they lived in. Fifteen thousand tons of railroad and government freight were piled up ready to be loaded. A thousand teamsters and nearly as many wagons were ready to follow the trains westward. Stricken North Platte seethed with the bustle and excitement, its last convulsion. Everything and everybody were bound westward, a human hurly-burly swirling in the wildest confusion. Houses collapsed and sank to the ground, were bundled in sections and canvas rolls and thrown upon the flat cars. Long lines of men, many negroes among them, staggered to the track with their curious and nondescript burdens, household goods, counters,

desks, saloon bars, imitation stucco fronts, cases and barrels of liquor, gambling lay-outs, supplies of every description.

Horse and mule teams toiled through the jumble of men and goods, through the throng of merchant-adventurers, clerks, down-at-the-heel lawyers, doctors, clergymen, jacks-of-all-trades, remittance men, tenderfeet, graders, gamblers, soldiers, Mexicans, Indians and gaudily dressed women whose neat derringers swung from belt ribbons,—all driven by the feverish desire to abandon North Platte and get started for Julesburg, eighty-two miles to the west, soon to brag of its title "the Wickedest City in America."

On the rim of this boiling caldron, from the safe viewpoint of her father's car, Miriam surveyed one of the strangest uprootings of a human community that the world had ever seen or ever would see. Sad as was her heart, this turbulent stream of flotsam and jetsam caught her interest. From where she stood, she saw a whole caravan approach, bearing the goods and chattels of Jed Haller, men, women, horses and mules, all burdened, driven by Haller's bellowed orders. Flanking them was a line of wagons carrying the heavier paraphernalia in barrels or boxes. A complete train of flat-cars was waiting for Haller and his professional brethren, and Miriam saw it as it was loaded and as it began, at least, to justify its name, "Hell on Wheels." A bar was set up to accommodate the ever-thirsty, four bartenders con-

stantly in action. Roulette wheels began to whir, each ringed with intent gamblers. Under an awning, a poker game started. Even the women resumed their professional occupation, mingling with the drinkers and the gamblers.

Miriam turned away at last and went to her room, throwing herself upon her bed. The tears came and she let them flow. She did not try to deceive herself, now that it was too late. She had loved Davy, loved him as a woman loves a strong man. His face, shining with courage and cleanness of heart, rose before her misty eyes. She felt again the warm, strong clasp of his hand, the grateful refuge of his young arm. His voice came back to her, with its cheerful uplift, and she saw again his boyish smile with the funny little quirks at the corners of his mouth. For a long time she lay face pressed to her pillow, her body shaking. Then she arose, bathed her eyes and went to look for her father.

They were under way toward Julesburg, humming along over the prairie, trains ahead of them, trains behind; one of an almost endless string of trains, all jammed with the migrating horde and the soldier escort. In the far background she saw the laboring teams.

They arrived at Julesburg in the late afternoon, to a new scene of bustling uproar. Another flash town was springing to life. Twenty-four hours ago its population was a handful. Within three weeks it was to be a city of 4,000. Miriam watched the crazy stampede as the

trains pulled in and emptied their passengers into streets ankle deep in dust. She marveled as she saw the buildings go up, sections of frame covered with heavy canvas. Armies of men were climbing and crawling over these mushroom structures, nailing planks, painting rude signs, spreading canvas. Life again flowed at high tide, as the ex-citizens of North Platte settled to their new home, laughing, cursing, shooting off their revolvers, in sheer exuberance.

Marsh appeared from his room and found Miriam at a window. He went to her and put his arm around her, saying nothing. She looked up, tears welling in her eyes, holding his hand tightly. He held her close for a moment.

"It's an hour until dark. Don't you want to take a walk with me? It might interest you. I'm going to see what kind of a new headquarters they have given me."

Miriam nodded, welcoming the stroll. It would help her to take her mind from her grief. They set out together, Marsh pointing out the sights, trying to amuse her, succeeding now and then.

"The Union Pacific laid out the town," he said, "but if we are not careful the gamblers and gunmen will own it. This place will be worse than North Platte. Every succeeding town on the line becomes a little tougher than the one left behind. Human life is held more cheaply. I think we will have to give these vantry a check."

The streets were jammed with a hilarious throng, bargaining for lots. Real estate values had gone up in stupendous leaps. Lots that had gone begging at $200 a day or two before were now held at $2,000, and at that price buyers were plentiful. Everybody seemed to have money. Miriam remarked to her father that she had never seen so many diamond shirt studs and solid gold watch chains.

"Flush times," said her father. "Everybody is making money. Easy come, easy go. The men who are displaying all this jewelry are, most of them, only clerks, small traders, railroad men."

The streets were deep with dust. A gray film lay over everything. Piles of goods stood in the roadway, guarded by owners still seeking locations. Warehouses, saloons, gambling houses, boarding houses and shacks for sleeping were rising in all directions. Marsh pointed out the big portable warehouse of the Casement Brothers, a warehouse which contained a general store and sleeping quarters and a vast dining room for the Casement construction gangs. It was a marvelous knockdown contraption of light timber, sheet iron and canvas, collapsible, every section numbered like parts of a puzzle. With every other stick, stone and thread of the new capital it had been brought on wheels.

They went on to headquarters where Marsh inspected his new office and gave several directions to subordinates. He suggested having

supper at the Julesburg House where the upper-tendom of wicked Julesburg took their meals. Already the hotel was being expanded with an additional wing. Miriam was astonished at the excellence and variety of the fare. The printed menu offered several kinds of soup, vegetables, a great variety of game, pastry and wine, and all for twelve bits, three dollars.

Marsh quietly indicated the celebrities of the place, some of them already known to Miriam. Buffalo Bill Cody was there and came to their table presently to pay his compliments. "The little general," as Miriam always thought of Jack Casement, joined them, with his brother Dan, a very quiet man with a slow smile. The General was boiling with wrath against the rowdy element.

"We've got to teach 'em a lesson again," he said to Marsh. "There's already been two killings. The town not twenty-four hours old and two men dead! I won't have it!

"We held shotgun court last night," he went on, "rounding up the few that we could get our hands on. We had the rope all ready, swung from a tree. Didn't want to hang 'em—just put the fear of God in 'em. The boys corralled a long lizard who'd been mixed up in at least one stage robbery. There wasn't any fight left in him. He looked kinda green.

"We'll give you fifteen minutes to get out of town," I told him.

" 'Gentlemen,' he said, very earnest, 'I thank

you. If this damn mule don't buck I don't want but five!' "

Miriam and her father walked slowly back through the gathering dark. Already Julesburg was hitting its stride, and the pace was faster than had ever been set by any wild town along the line. The saloons and dance halls were going full blast and the uproar along the whole length of the street was deafening. The stamping of booted feet, the hoarse yelling of half-drunken men, the clashing music of a dozen bands and orchestras all merged into an infernal clamor. Out along the Platte, beyond the kerosene light glare in the city streets, many campfires winked in the darkness.

They returned to the car and its grateful seclusion. Uncle Tobe entered to "light up," but Miriam told him to come back later.

"Father," she said after awhile, "I can hardly bear to speak of Davy, but—do you suppose there's a chance he might not have been killed? Was Peter absolutely sure?"

"Yes. There was no doubt in his mind," returned Marsh. "He described the whole thing very vividly. You see, Davy must have fallen nearly a hundred feet when the rope broke. He could not have survived such a fall. The floor of the gorge into which he fell seemed to be rocky, Jesson said. It was one of those volcanic splits often found in that country. It had blocked their path and Davy was trying to climb down one side to where the gorge narrowed so

that he could swing across and see what lay just beyond. Jesson had advised against it, saying it wasn't worth while, that there was no possible use to keep on in such a country. He says Davy insisted and that he let him have his way, finally."

"I couldn't bear to hear any more yesterday," said Miriam. "It nearly killed me, father. I felt as if my heart had turned to stone."

She put her cheek against Marsh's, and thus they sat for a long time, in the silent sympathy of grief.

"I loved him, father," said Miriam, after awhile. "When he looked into my eyes as we knelt together on the floor of the car, that day he escaped from the Sioux, I knew it, but I tried to deceive myself. I think he knew it. He loved me. A woman knows, father. I could not have kept my engagement with Peter. I thought I would be able to put David out of my heart. I realize now that I couldn't have done it. I would have had to break with Peter. Would that have been fair?"

"You could have done nothing else, dear child," said Marsh, more moved than he had ever been in his life. He wished from the bottom of his heart that he knew how to comfort this stricken little daughter. His words seemed clumsy. His pity made him inarticulate.

"Loving Davy, you could not have gone on with Jesson. That would not have been fair to either man. You had to follow where your heart

led. It almost seemed that you and Davy were made for each other, from the very first, back in Springfield."

Miriam was weeping softly upon her father's shoulder. He petted her, comforting her with broken words, accusing himself silently for reviving such sorrowful memories. She sensed his thoughts.

"This is good for me, daddy. I have no one else in the world to pour my heart out to. It helps me to talk about Davy. Only, I can't make up my mind that I will never see him again. It seems like an awful dream. It's so dreadfully unreal. I can't believe he is dead. He doesn't *seem* to be dead, daddy. Oh, that sounds insane, I know."

"It would be cruel of me to hold out any hope to you, dear," said Marsh, gently. "Better make up your mind to the worst now than torture yourself with an impossible hope. You may not think so, but time heals the hearts of the young. It isn't so, more's the pity, with the old."

They talked a little while, then Miriam kissed him and turned to leave the room. She paused on the threshold and looked at her father with a kind of defiant courage, the pathos of which wrung Marsh's heart.

"Thank you, daddy. You have really helped me a lot. But, daddy, Davy doesn't seem to be dead. Wouldn't I know it for certain? Loving him so much, wouldn't I *know* it?"

Marsh could not utter a single word.

CHAPTER XXI

MIRIAM TURNS HER BACK

General Dodge, genius of the road, arrived in Julesburg in July, when end of track had reached Lodge Pole, twenty-five miles beyond the new capital. Major-general, Indian fighter, military tactician, Dodge was to become the supreme railroad engineer of America. Since young manhood he had searched the plains and mountains, patiently plotting the line of the road to come, following the old trails made by Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, Stevens and Frémont, and the still older trails that had been beaten by the red men. Of medium height and spare build, soldierly erect, bearded, keen-eyed, he radiated competence and decision.

He listened grimly to Marsh's outline—the failure of Jesson's expedition, the disaffection of the workmen, the delay in the arrival of the cattle herd depended upon for meat. The General listened intently, asking few questions. The situation was plain enough.

"It's hard for me to believe that no way can be found through the Black Hills, Marsh," he said finally. "I ran a few lines through that region in '65 before the Sioux made it too hot for my little escort, and I got the general idea

that it could be done. Still, there's no going against your reports. They're good men?"

"The best," said Marsh. "Every report has checked up. All came to the same conclusion. Maps and figures are here for you to look over."

"What are the men complaining about, especially?"

"Buffalo meat and irregular pay," returned the superintendent. "They are sick of buffalo steaks, morning, noon and night. I can't say I blame them. They've got to have meat for the kind of work they do, but the one kind palls on them. You know how these fellows are. Then the reds have been giving us more trouble than ever with the pay cars. You would almost think they knew when the cars were coming. The men spend their month's pay of ninety dollars in a few nights over the bars of Haller and his ilk. Then they wait impatiently until next pay day. If their money is held up they get ugly. That's the situation now. We have had trouble of that sort several times. There's a bad foreign element always ready to fan it."

"We'll meet that when it breaks," said General Dodge. "Our present problem is the decision of a route. What do you think?"

"We have no alternative," said Marsh. "It's Smoky River and a hundred miles off the old line or the old wagon trail and two hundred miles out of the way, a little matter of a million or so. Deroux has a fair enough proposition."

"Send for him," said Dodge.

While the major decision was forming at headquarters, the depleted crews, only skeletons of the big gangs that should have been strung out for half a mile along the prairie, kept the rails moving. The loyal ones were the pick of the force, ex-soldiers of the Blue or Gray, practically to a man; men with pride in their labor and an American enthusiasm to win against odds. Such men were Pat Casey, late corporal; Slattery, the big sergeant, old Herman Schultz, typical of the competent, industrious and true-hearted Germans who came to America in large numbers in the late forties to escape the persecution and intolerance of the iron-handed Hohenzollerns. They and their kind, hardly half of the full crew, toiled doubly to keep the road advancing, while the majority milled in the streets of Julesburg, crowding around loud-mouthed agitators who shrieked about the rights of the honest working man and the tyranny of capital, when not soaking themselves with fiery whiskey of the innumerable gin mills.

"Sure an' I would like to drive thim wid wan company of the ould Foorty-foorth," said Casey. " 'T would be no murder at all. Dogs they are, and as dogs they should be treated. If the matter were lift to me, I would chaarge thim wid the bay'nit," he concluded blood-thirstily.

"They're dirty scutts," said the sergeant, "but there's nawthin' to be done wid th' loikes av thim."

He shook his grizzled head disgustedly and

walked back to his gang. Pat climbed upon a freight car and sat dangling his legs over the side. He started to light his old clay pipe, gazing off into space as he applied the fire. Such persons as might have been refreshing their eyes with the sight of Mr. Casey would have seen him stiffen, drop the pipe and swiftly dot his breast with trembling fingers. To any such the impression would have been conveyed that a ghost had risen within the range of his bulging eyes. His lips moved in ancient incantation.

Toward the railroad, striding briskly, came a tall figure, head thrown back, face alert. A loud "Hello!" across the wind, lifted the shovelers and the spikers from their work. Casey slid to the ground and raced forward. And the expression of Mr. Casey was the expression of one who had lived to see a miracle. Twice he opened his mouth to call out but the speech jammed in his working throat. Finally he got it out, words tumbling among wild, Celtic whoops of joy.

"Be th' glory of God, 'tis the bye! Davy! It's kilt ye were, entirely!"

He pounded Brandon ecstatically, holding him off at arm's length, studying him.

"It's me, all right, Pat," said Davy. "I fell half way to China, but my good angel slipped a tree under me. So here I am. I'll tell you all about it later on. But I can't wait now, Pat. I bring big news."

He threw a glance around, amazement in his blue eyes.

"What's this mean. You're building south—off the old line?"

"We are headin' for Smoky River," said Pat. "Th' superintindint gave the arrders this mornin'.

" 'Subjick to change, Mr. Casey,' he says. 'Th' deal has not been closed entirely,' he says, 'but we must waste no time,' he says. 'Gin'ral Dodge is certain to approve. I lave it to ye, Mr. Casey.' "

"But I don't understand," said Brandon. "Mr. Jesson returned, of course?"

"He did," said Pat. "Bad cess to him! I could never stand the airs and graces of that man. Back he comes, Davy, with wurrd that there's no pass in the hills. Th' superintindint, with a face like he'd lost his bist fri'nd, sees there's nawthin' to do but turn south.'

Brandon's face hardened. The observant Casey saw his eyes go frosty with anger, saw his mouth straighten, saw him tighten like a spring.

"I knew I smelled a rat," said Pat. "What's troublin' ye, bye?"

"Jesson is a liar and worse," Davy shot out. "The pass is there. I found it at once, took Jesson straight to it. We climbed to the top of the gorge. As I was going down on a rope to test the rock wall, the rope broke and dropped me a mile or two. If I hadn't landed in a big tree, I'd have smashed like an egg!"

"Broke, did it now?" said Pat.

"I hope so," said Brandon. "But, Pat, I've

A William Fox Production. *The Iron Horse.*

IN TOIL AND DANGER THE WOMEN STOOD SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE MEN

got to get to town as quick as I can move. Have you got a handcar here?''

''We have nawthin' but sooperior hand caars,'' said Mr. Casey, eagerly. '' 'Tis mesilf and the sargint will poomp ye to the Gomoorah of creation!''

They flung eastward with such notable man-power that they rattled into Julesburg within an hour and a half. Brandon leaped from the car and ran toward headquarters. He burst in like a bombshell and no bomb could have created a greater explosion. General Dodge, Marsh, Jesson and Deroux were bent over the long table spread with survey maps. They turned, straightening in amazement. The General waited immovable, silent, not quite understanding. Marsh came forward with outstretched hands, gathering Davy to him as he would have embraced a son. Deroux's face was like a madman's, working with insensate fury. Jesson stood with every drop of blood receded from his face.

Always direct, Davy plunged a gauntleted hand into the bosom of his buckskin shirt, torn and ripped, withdrew a roll of paper and lay it upon the table.

''There's your pass, Mr. Marsh. There's a rough map, with my field notes.''

General Dodge spread out map and notes, ran through them swiftly and turned to Marsh.

''Exactly,'' he burst forth, ''just about where I believed it should be. Young man, you have performed a notable service. You will not find

us ungrateful. But there's something here that needs clearing up. Mr. Jesson! You were with this young man. You returned with the positive assertion that there was no pass. Does this mean that the discovery was made after you left him, thinking he had been killed?"

"It means," said Brandon, speaking in a low voice that vibrated like humming wires, "that Mr. Jesson is a liar and a scoundrel—traitor to the road!"

Jesson covered the two yards between them at a bound, aiming a swinging blow at Brandon. It went home, jarring Davy. Marsh pinioned Jesson's arms as Davy recovered himself, rigid with anger.

"Explain!" snapped Dodge.

"He's a lying hound," said Jesson. "He knows there is no pass. He wants to discredit me. He has a personal reason, this squaw man!"

"Mr. Jesson is right," cried Deroux. "There's no pass in all that country. This fellow's a crook. He's lying to serve his own ends!"

"Silence!" ordered the General. "Or get out of this office!"

"I am speaking the truth," said Davy. "I guided this man to the pass. He was too damned cowardly to examine it himself, and I had to go down into the gorge. The rope broke —maybe it broke. It's a queer looking break, Jesson. I took the trouble to go all the way around and climb back to where that loose end

dangled. There isn't a sign of where a rock edge might have weakened it. What's more, I found my hatchet where you must have dropped it. What was my hatchet doing out of the pack where I left it?"

"Go on," said the General.

"I fell and this hound ran away," Davy went on. "He thought I was smashed. No wonder. One chance in a million saved me. The rope gave way gradually, slowing up the first part of my drop, and when the last strands let go I lit in a tree-top. If it was an accident, why didn't he work around into the pass?"

"You are sure about the pass?" asked General Dodge. "You could not be mistaken?"

"No doubt in the world, sir. I had my father's opinion about it, fifteen years ago, and my dad was a good engineer. He knew."

"That settles it," said the General. "Mr. Jesson, the Union Pacific has no further use for you. If Mr. Brandon cares to prosecute you for attempted murder we will stand back of him."

"I don't think it could be proved," said Davy, "but I will take care of this rat."

"As for you, Mr. Deroux," General Dodge resumed, "the evidence of collusion between you and this discredited engineer is sufficiently plain. I tell you now that the Union Pacific will not run within a hundred miles of your lands. There is no necessity for further conference. Good day, sir!"

"Don't be too sure about that!" cried Deroux. "You and your damned railroad will be coming

to me yet, whining for help. You'll pay, too! You're not lording it over slaves in uniform now. I run this country and I'll open hell before your rails!"

"You will leave this office within ten seconds or I will have you thrown out!" said General Dodge.

Deroux swaggered out of headquarters, Jesson at his heels.

"I'll see you at Haller's in half an hour," said the engineer.

"I don't give a damn if I never see you again," snarled Deroux. "You've made a sweet mess of it. This country will be too hot to hold you!"

"You're excited," said Jesson.

Deroux spat contemptuously and turned down the street. Jesson went straight to the private car, his mind whirling with schemes. What was the best tack to take? The Smoky River plan was done for. Ruby? He wanted her but he wanted no wife without money. Marriage between him and Ruby was impossible. What could he do with Miriam? After what had taken place in headquarters could he hope to make her believe him? Yet she was a loyal little soul. He believed he could work upon her sympathies. It was worth trying.

Straight to her he went and fell into a chair. She saw his white, drawn face.

"Peter, what is it?"

"I am in deep trouble, Miriam. I have come

to you for help. Brandon is back. Yes, he's alive, quite all right."

She sprang from her chair, one hand flying to her breast. Then the blood surged to her cheeks and her great eyes filled with tears of joy. Peter Jesson knew then that Miriam Marsh was not for him—never could be. But she represented his only hope of escaping from the pit of danger that had opened before him.

"He's back, Miriam, back accusing me of trying to kill him. He has always hated me. Probably he believes what he has been saying, but it's not true. It was an accident. I was certain he was killed. But they're all against me, your father, Dodge."

"What do you mean, Peter?" cried Miriam, her heart filled with the joy of Davy's safety, her mind confused by Jesson's words. He leaned toward her.

"Brandon claims that I am in some way responsible for his accident, that I cut the rope as he swung from the cliff. He has no proof, Miriam! You have known me. Am I capable of such a deed? He was a fool to try it. I tried to stop him. The rope frayed, pulled apart. My God! Say you believe me!"

Miriam strove with her conflicting emotions. Davy was alive! But this awful accusation! Jesson a murderer! The man she had once loved, trusted. Davy was mistaken. He couldn't mean it. Why, they had known Jesson for years! She must be fair. Her mind, not

her heart, must rule here. Jesson, swift to take advantage of her plight, went on:

"Miriam, you know what this means to us, to you. Brandon's real reason is his hatred for me. He wants to hound me from the place. He is mad about you. Every one knows it. You will be dragged into this affair, into a vulgar brawl. Such things mean nothing to Brandon, to men out here. They are used to it. But can you bear it? You must be protected even if I go under. You are my first thought."

Greatly troubled, Miriam groped for the truth. It was true that Davy hated Jesson. Her heart told her why. He believed this thing because he wanted to believe it. He hadn't thought of her.

"Say that you believe me, Miriam, only that."

"Peter, I do believe you meant no harm to Davy Brandon. It must have been an accident, of course. There's a mistake, somewhere. Davy is quick-tempered. He doesn't like you. I understand that. But he wouldn't do this intentionally. He's too fair to do you such a wrong. Failure to find the pass has upset him. It was his dream, Peter."

Miriam paused.

"But, Peter, the pass! You reported that it did not exist. Is that true also?"

"Absolutely, upon my honor," said Jesson, quickly, convincingly. "Brandon is not an engineer. He falls into a gorge through which no railroad could possibly be built and jumps to the conclusion that it's the longed for gateway.

I saw at a glance it was impossible. No railroad could climb such grades."

"It will work out, some way," said Miriam. "When they investigate Davy's report they will find where he was mistaken. They are all angry, Peter, but father is a just man and so is General Dodge. You will lose nothing in the end. Davy will be terribly disappointed, I suppose, but that can't be helped."

"I don't want trouble with him," said Jesson, "but it may be hard to avoid."

"You must not have trouble," Miriam cried. "You must keep out of his way."

"I will do anything you ask me to do," said Jesson. "You are wonderful, Miriam. You will not regret your faith in me."

She walked to the platform of the car with him, greatly troubled, striving to believe in him. Jesson stepped to the ground and stood leaning against the handrail. Brandon turned the corner of the car, saw the two talking intimately. His self-control snapped. He went deaf and blind to everything except Jesson's hateful face. For the moment he was insane. Miriam saw his eyes and cried out, but nothing could have stopped the boy. He gave a tiger spring at Jesson and smashed straight from the shoulder. Jesson went down as if hit with an ax. Davy stood over him, teeth showing in a snarl, fists poised to strike again. The next instant Miriam was between them, angrier than she had ever been in her life.

"You coward!" she cried. "Mr. Jesson was

right! Don't say a word to me! I won't have it! You're a brute!"

Jesson slowly got to his feet, a hand pressed to his bleeding mouth. Davy stepped back, dropping his hands to his side. Anger was still in his eyes, but sanity had returned. He was very white, cold.

"I am sorry I struck this man," he said, slowly. "But I think I would do it again. I won't trouble you with my company, Miriam."

His temper flashed again.

"I see that you are the kind of girl who prefers Mr. Jesson's kind of man."

Miriam turned her back upon him. He was utterly hateful to her. She put her hand on Jesson's arm.

"Are you hurt, Peter?" she asked, gently.

Brandon gazed at them a moment, forcing a smile, bitter, ugly. Then he wheeled and walked rapidly toward town.

CHAPTER XXII

HIS WORD OF HONOR

Deroux had no use for failures. Recklessly generous to men that served him well, he was coldly intolerant of any who bungled his plans. There was something baronial in this dominating lord of the plains, more than a touch of the medieval feudal chief sweepingly expansive even in his villainies.

He sat at a table in Haller's, drinking his private stock, his retainers around him—the Nueces Kid, Texas Jack, Henry Thornton and a slim, graceful Mexican, almost pure Spanish, Don Filipe Gonzales who, for all his dandy air and girlish look, was a deadly knife fighter famed from the Platte to the Rio Grande. Deroux was doing the talking, suffering no interruptions.

"We're leaving this hole to-night," he said. "You, Kid, see that the horses are ready for the trail. Before we ride I want you all here, every man of you. I've got scores to settle before we pull our freight. That damned Brandon! Now listen. I want no bungling in this job. I shall be here at this table at 9 o'clock. Alone or with that skunk, Jesson, I don't know yet. It doesn't matter. I want you, Kid, to walk in at ten min-

utes after nine and go to the bar. Stay there. Henry, you will come a minute or two later. Find a place along the side wall, where you can watch the door. Jack here will stand over there by the monte table. Then, Don Filipe, you show up. I want you to drift around, to be handy if you're needed. The idea is for all of you to arrive separately, naturally, as if you had nothing on your minds.

"At about half-past nine this young Brandon will be here. I'll see to that. I aim to get Jesson to kill him if Jesson has the guts. He may flinch when the pinch comes, for he's yellow!"

"For me, Señor Deroux, thees keeling would be a pleasure," said Don Filipe Gonzales.

"I've got your part ready for you," smiled Deroux. "If Jesson quits, I want you boys posted where it will be easy for one of you, whichever way the play goes, to start trouble with Brandon. He's a hot-headed young devil and right now he's itching for a fight. Do anything that seems best, but remember, it's got to look as if Brandon started the trouble! I don't think he's specially fast with a gun, and of course, he would be nowhere with Don Filipe in knife play. Three of you ought to be enough to keep Haller and his shotgun guards reaching for the ceiling. Is that all clear?"

Around the table they nodded, one by one.

"All right," said Deroux. "Jesson is to have the first chance. If he pulls it off, they'll hang him sure. That's what I'd like to see. If he welches, it's up to one of you boys to nail Bran-

don. And self-defense, remember! Make it stick out!"

He ordered a round of drinks, then dismissed them imperiously. Jesson came into the bar presently and went straight to Deroux's table. The Frenchman surprised him with an amiable greeting, almost as cordial as before.

"Well, well, my friend, it was the devil's own luck!" he said. "I was angry this afternoon, but it was not fair to you, this anger. You must remember that I have played for high stakes, my friend. My disappointment was very sharp. If I hurt your feelings, I apologize, and Deroux does not often apologize."

"I quite understand," said Jesson, vastly relieved. If this was the way Deroux was going to take it, matters were looking up. Deroux offered another possible refuge if things came to the worst and it became necessary to leave Julesburg. "As you say, it was the devil's own luck. Brandon ought to have been killed. Only a miracle saved him. I don't see how you can hold me responsible."

"You were merely unlucky," said Deroux. And he thought to himself that there was no place in the world, in his world, for luckless men. "We will forget it. But we cannot forget Brandon. You must remember that he has the power to make very serious trouble for you. Moreover, my friend, he has submitted you to public humiliation. The railroad crowd will believe him. Your life will be impossible in this place."

"Curse him!" said Jesson. "I wish to God I had killed him!"

"It is not too late," counseled Deroux. "He will be here to-night. I will arrange it. My men will be here also, ready to do exactly as they have been told. If Brandon lifts a hand to you, shoot him. Kill him like a dog! Not a gun will be leveled at you or a hand raised. I will see to that."

"I can't afford to risk a failure," said Jesson. "I am no gun man. I can shoot straight enough, but I haven't the quickness of these Western fellows."

"You will not need it," said Deroux. "I will make you a present of a little trick, my friend. Twice in my life, by using it, I have killed faster men than I. When you leave me you will go to your room. You will select a sharp knife and you will then cut the tip from the holster of your revolver. If Mr. Brandon threatens you, stand very close to him. Anger him by any means you care to use. Let him reach for his gun. He will need time to jerk it from his holster. But you will not jerk your gun. You will tip the holster toward him and fire straight through the little hole you will have made. It is very simple."

"That's damned clever," said Jesson. "But, Deroux, Miss Marsh is standing by me in this thing. I have promised her not to fight Brandon. I believe I can hold her in spite of her father."

"Mr. Jesson," said Deroux, "you will excuse

my frankness, but there are times when your reasoning is childish. Miss Marsh has only a hint of the truth. Like most women who have trusted a man, she hesitates to recognize that she has been mistaken. You see I *am* quite frank. In defending you she is unconsciously defending her own judgment. Moreover, up to now she has had only one side of what took place in headquarters—your story. You probably played upon her sympathy and loyalty, a very effective method with women. But what will occur, presently? From her father, from Brandon, with whom she is in love, my friend, from this one and that one, she will eventually get the truth.

"For example, within ten days the discovery of the pass will be confirmed. Even the rope which you so incautiously left behind will damn you because it will be found, not at the edge of an accidental gorge, but at the brink of the pass itself, the pass whose existence you have denied. What then? They will know you lied. Again I say, pardon me. I am putting myself in the attitude of the fair young lady. Knowing you to be a liar, Miss Marsh will be quite ready to believe you a would-be murderer. You will agree that my logic is faultless?"

Jesson, who had writhed under the sting of Deroux's tongue, nodded bitterly.

"Oh, you're right. I was a fool to suppose I could save myself in that quarter. I don't know what in hell was the matter with me. I couldn't seem to think straight."

"That is past. We are dealing with the present," continued Deroux. "If you will carefully follow the suggestions I have offered you will be rid of Brandon and the menace of a prison."

Jesson flinched as if stung.

"I will be here to-night," he said. "What time shall it be?"

"Join me at nine, or a little before."

Leaving Deroux, Jesson walked toward the Julesburg House to which his negro servant had taken his belongings. Casey, followed closely by Slattery, Schultz and Dinny O'Brien, went by him at a trot, Casey throwing Jesson a look which scorched.

"Damned low bogtrotter," said Jesson. "The news is all over town, by this time, I suppose. Wonder what those Irish trash are in such a rush about?"

Mr. Casey would have sacrificed duty to his private pleasures if he had caught that remark of Jesson's, but speed was a very present necessity. Pat was winging upon an errand which might be considered disgraceful to a Donegal man. His mission was to stop a fight. He had left Davy not ten minutes ago in the King of the Hills, a bar scarcely less pretentious than Haller's. He had found Brandon drinking, in a black mood, hard to talk to.

"I'm amazed at ye, me bye," said Pat. " 'Tis not the haard stuff ye should be drinkin' this eve, with Miss Miriam so happy and all that you're back from the land of spirits."

"Miss Miriam is nothing to me, Pat, and I am certainly nothing to her. She has made it plain whom she prefers to believe. I don't want to talk. Go 'way now and let me alone."

"Davy," said Pat, "you're a young bye. Sure an' I'm old enough to be the father of two av ye. 'Tis only an ipisode, me son, a little cloud. How could ye expict a young gurrl to believe her engaged man was a black-hearted murtherer? It's misunderstandin' the truth of things the young lady is. We'll set it all right by marnin'."

"I'll set it right by morning," said Davy, without heat, but in a tone which made Casey take notice. Then his voice flared up.

"Pat, I'm going to kill that hound! I'll give him more than an even break. But it will be him or me before this night is done with."

There was wisdom in Casey, a quick prescience which seldom failed him. He recognized the mood.

"Then lave that alone," he said quietly, pointing to Davy's whiskey glass.

"Don't worry," said Davy. "I'm done. I don't know why I touched any of the stuff except that I felt cold, cold all over in the middle of July. That's a funny thing!"

Casey waved a cheerful hand and drifted to the street. Once clear of the saloon he put on speed to the bunkhouse and laid the problem before the board of strategy. It was old Schultz who found the solution which seemed best.

"Idt iss th' young letty, Gasey, dot ve moost

find," he counseled. "Vit a young man in anger the atvice of mens iss useless. Only the young letty can stop him."

"Right!" said Slattery. "Th' gurrl must be told."

They set off hot foot for Marsh's car. From her window, Miriam saw them coming and hastened to greet them, suspecting from their obvious haste and excitement that something unusual had occurred.

"Sure we would not be intrudin' upon ye, Miss Miriam," said Casey, "if the bye was not in bad trouble. His wrongs are wringin' the hearrt av him and 'tis not he who can see where the feet av him are leadin'. Ye've a brave heaart, Miss, and there's no good in kapin' the truth from ye. 'Tis a killin' we must stand in the way av. He will not heed the likes av us, but to ye, it may be, he'll turn his stubborn ear."

"Oh, what is it, what is it?" cried Miriam.

"Davy and Jisson," said Pat. "The bye is woild with anger, Miss Miriam, and wid more than anger, with sorrow and disappointment. He feels that his swateheart had turned her back upon him fer a thafe and a murtherer! I must speak ye, plain, Miss Miriam. 'Tis the truth as God is above us!"

"He means to fight Jesson? Oh, Pat, we must stop it! It cannot go on. It would be too terrible! Tell me what to do."

"Ye must send fer him, Miss. 'Tis the only way. Ye must lift the blackness from his

hearrt. Ye must show him ye belave in him. 'Tis all he cares for."

"I do believe in him," cried Miriam. "I know the truth now. Get him for me, Pat. Find him. Bring him here. Tell him I must talk to him. Tell him anything, but bring him!"

"Miss Miriam," said Casey, "I'll bring him to ye if I have to knock him sinseless. Perhaps 't would be the best way av all. 'T is not only this Jisson, Miss Miriam, that makes us onaisy. 'T is Jisson's fri'nd, Deroux and th' black hearted gang av him that's swaggerin' through th' town."

"Go!" cried Miriam. "We're wasting time!"

The Musketeers disappeared at a run. Miriam dropped into a chair at the window, from which she could see the street. She sat tense, strung to the breaking point, her hands clinched, her eyes staring up the dark street, straining, yearning.

Her faithful messengers found Davy still brooding at the bar of the King of the Hills, but there was no whiskey before him.

"Ye're wanted," said Casey. "Miss Miriam wants ye this minute."

"Casey, you are butting in where you are *not* wanted," said Brandon with sullen quiet.

"Sure," said Pat. "But, Davy, me bye, ye can make up your stubborn mind to this, ye'll go on th' two legs av ye, or ye'll be carried!"

"You are a hell of a lot of friends," said the

boy, with a scornful glance. "I'll remember this! But I'll go with you."

"Misther Davy Brandon," said Pat, temper rising. "Ye're a stubborn fule. Were it not for Miss Miriam I'd be minded to let ye go yer way. I thought ye had some sinse in the big body av ye, but I was mistook. But Miss Miriam wants ye, and go ye shall!"

At the car they saw him through the door, then backed away in the darkness.

Miriam met him at the threshold and came close, her face uplifted in appeal to the sullen, brooding eyes.

"I sent for you, Davy," she began tremulously. "I sent for you to beg you not to fight Mr. Jesson. You must not hold it against Pat. He is loyal to me—to both of us. He did what he thought was right.

"This cannot go on, Davy. It would be too dreadful. No, don't speak. I know what you want to say. But you must not fight. You must give me your word."

He stood silent, his face dark with sullen anger, but his bruised heart aching with love for her. The anguish of the thought that she loved Jesson, Jesson, of all men, was like a twisting knife. It maddened him that she had given her belief and trust to Jesson, had given it instinctively. Resentment over her injustice, her instant preference for the man he knew to be a scoundrel, fought with the love that struggled to soften him. Pride imprisoned his straining desire to sweep her into his arms and plead for

forgiveness. A devil cried out in him to hurt her, to punish her with looks and words.

"What a fool I have been!" he said in a low voice. "What a fool, to think you could believe anything against one of your own sort. I might have guessed that this afternoon."

Pride flamed in Miriam but it flamed vainly against her new knowledge of the truth, against the love and understanding that filled her heart. Her eyes were wet as she took his hand, very gently, and came even closer to him.

"Davy, listen to me, dear. I was afraid of you this afternoon. You frightened me. You were so different from the Davy I thought I knew. I was disappointed. I did not know the truth. Peter lied to me, Davy. I could not believe that a man I had known so long would be capable of such a thing. But I know now. Father told me all this evening. Pat told me. I understand how you feel, how terribly angry you are. But, Davy, Davy, you must put it aside. A fight between you and Peter would kill me. The shame of it—a brawl, perhaps a murder, in one of those awful dens! You can't know, dear, how a woman feels about such things. I am not pleading for Peter, now. I am pleading for you, for us both, Davy. Can't you guess why, my dear, can't you guess why?"

The glory of her love was over her pleading face. Davy could not speak. He dropped to his knees, pressing her hand to his cheek. Sullen anger passed from him like the recession of an evil dream.

"Promise me, Davy."

"I cannot, Miriam. I struck him when he was unarmed. If I avoid him now men will say I'm afraid. It would shame me, Miriam."

"Let them say it," said Miriam, proudly. "Those who know David Brandon would not even think it."

He arose and drew his revolver from its holster, laying it upon the table. Miriam's face was transfigured by happiness.

"Promise me, dearest," she breathed, her lips close to his. "It means so much to me!"

"I promise," said Brandon. "I give you my word I won't fight Jesson. You have made it hard, Miriam, but you can depend upon me."

She gave him her lips and for a long time they remained clasped in each other's arms.

"You must go," said Miriam presently. "Father wants me. But come to me in the morning, David mine."

CHAPTER XXIII

A BROKEN PLEDGE

Before nightfall the news of the finding of the pass and of Brandon's escape and his return to accuse Jesson spread through the town, the main topic in a score of saloons. Ordinarily Julesburg could not have been stirred by rumors of trouble between any two men. Gun play and knife battles were of hourly occurrence, commonplaces of a hair-triggered community. But practically everybody knew that Deroux was mixed up in the quarrel; that young Brandon had interfered in the plans of this powerful person. The talk was that the road would not be built through Deroux's country, after all, and that it was Brandon who had wrecked the Frenchman's ambitious schemes.

Men speculated over their liquor as to what Deroux would do; as to how Jesson would square the blow that had felled him in the afternoon. Half-a-dozen men in the railroad yards had seen Brandon knock Jesson down. They had seasoned the gossip with a spicy account of the fight, adding that Miss Marsh had caused it. Sensing a connection between Deroux and Jesson, and assuming that the latter would have to fight it out with Brandon, all Julesburg

looked for trouble to come to a head before the night passed.

Haller's was unusually crowded when Deroux entered, alone, and found an unoccupied table near the door. Many of the habitués of the rival saloons and gambling houses had been attracted to The Arabian Nights in the hope of witnessing the inevitable climax. Men were three deep along the bar, and the press around the gambling tables was so thick that newcomers eager to buck the tiger had to stand back, peering over the heads of the absorbed players. The air was electric with the tingling expectation of excitement. Old Haller, perched on his high stool at the middle of the bar, his monumental plug hat pushed to the back of his head, a sure sign of mental stress, chewed an unlighted cigar as his shrewd eyes played over the close-packed throng. All of the rumors had come to him and they fitted together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The answer was trouble.

He saw Jesson enter, stop to speak to Ruby, who had been waiting, obviously, for the engineer's appearance; saw them talk a little while, Ruby seeming to plead with Jesson as she held his arm, and saw Jesson finally weave a way through the crowd and drop into a seat at Deroux's table. From under his shaggy eyebrows the Judge studied both men. He observed that Deroux was tense, strung like a bow, savage eyes turning frequently to the door, and that Jesson's face was pale and drawn. His

gaze roamed over the crowd. He fidgeted in his chair.

"He's desprit," mused old Haller, watching Jesson. "Like a rat in a corner. Doesn't want to fight but knows he may have to. Them kind is the most dangerous."

The Nueces Kid sauntered in, threw a swift glance at Deroux and strolled to the bar, unceremoniously pushing his way to the rail. He slouched upon it, his right side turned to the room, thumb of his right hand tucked into the armhole of his vest, squarely above the low-swinging gun whose holster was strapped to his thigh. That was enough for the Judge. He could see through a grindstone when somebody made a hole for him. Turning to the nearest bartender he quietly gave an order. The drink dispenser immediately sidled out from behind the bar and walked over to the gambling tables. He stopped there as he got the ear of one after another of these impassive but always alert gentlemen of Chance. Each nodded quick understanding, presently turned his game over to an assistant and eased out of the press about his immediate table.

Again the door opened, this time to admit Henry Thornton, known throughout the territory as Deroux's fastest gun fighter, a short, heavy-set killer with a record of homicide which stretched from Mexico to Canada, a cold-eyed master of skillful murder. Thornton's bleak eyes found Deroux, glinted at his master's nod.

He went to the wall and from this post of observation near the door, surveyed the crowd as he stood with folded arms. Texas Jack came in a few minutes later and stood at the edge of the crowd of players at the monte table.

"All here but that flashy greaser," thought Haller. "Ah, there he is!"

Don Filipe Gonzales glided into the saloon, white teeth showing as he smiled a greeting to acquaintances. He flourished a bow to a group of Haller's girls, sweeping a half-circle with his wide-brimmed sombrero which jingled silver bells as he bent. He began to weave through the crowd, graceful as a serpent.

Old Haller caught the eye of Kentucky Jack, leading apostle of draw poker, a square gambler and a dead shot of indomitable nerve. The Kentuckian went to the bar, followed by two other gamblers, an Easterner named Polk and a tall Louisianan, a New Orleans creole, Jules Lamar. The Judge shoved a box of cigars at them—they were not drinking men—and as each selected a perfecto, he spoke quickly, in a low voice:

"Boys, I want you to do me a favor. I don't know what the play is, but Deroux has got his gang here. They've drifted in one by one, under orders, in course. Looks like they don't mean to give that game kid, Brandon, a chance fer his life. This ain't no time to call on my shotgun deppities, fer these fellers of Deroux's are scattered all over the room on purpose. This thing has got to be handled quiet like.

"Here's the program, as I've been figgerin'

it out. Each of you pick out his man and git close to him. Drift alongside easy like, but stick by where you kin git action in a hurry. They won't suspicion you're up to anything special if you pull it off natural like. Then, if they start anything agin young Brandon, we'll be fixed to give him a fair show."

Separately the gamblers drifted away from the bar. The Kentuckian, stopping here and there, edged toward the Nueces Kid and came to a halt at the Kid's right shoulder. He drew a quick dart of suspicion from the snaky eyes as he greeted the gunman and rapped for the bartender.

"Join me," said Kentucky Jack, as the bartender slid a bottle along the polished mahogany.

"I'm not drinkin'," said the Kid.

"Suit yourself," said Jack and poured the first drink of whiskey he had emptied into a glass for years. The Nueces Kid edged away slightly. After a while, the Kentuckian, shifting his elbow, imperceptibly closed the gap, measuring the distance with a glance as the Kid's eyes switched to the door.

Haller, watching closely, saw Lamar post himself near Thornton and nodded in satisfaction as the saturnine Polk edged toward Texas Jack. So far so good. There remained the Mexican. He himself would keep an eye on Gonzales. He dropped a hand underneath the bar, assured himself that his Colt was handy and called to Gonzales across the room.

"Howdy, Don Filipe! How about a little aguardiente?"

"Delighted, Señor Haller," said Gonzales.

After all, the Mexican reflected swiftly, one post was as good as another for the work that was expected of him. He was raising his glass to his lips when the door opened. Every man in the room except the groups in feverish play at the tables, straightened. But the tension broke when Corporal Casey, with his friends, Slattery, Schultz and O'Brien walked in, glanced about, then wedged themselves among the drinkers at the bar.

Almost immediately Brandon was in the room, swinging in hurriedly. The right hand of Kentucky Jack darted unerringly, snatching the Nueces Kid's gun from its holster. Simultaneously Lamar had his Bowie knife at Thornton's throat while he swiftly disarmed the killer. Texas Jack was looking straight into the muzzle of Polk's derringer which had appeared from nowhere. And Haller, ready prepared, rested upon the bar a six-shooter which pointed straight at the breast of Don Filipe Gonzales. Deroux, seeing in a flash how his men had been trapped, sprang to his feet, cursing savagely.

Haller's booming voice overrode the clamor:

"As she is, boys! If there's any fightin' in here, it's goin' to be fair fightin'. This is a law and order place!"

Hesitating, puzzled over the swift drama whose significance escaped him, Brandon came

forward to Haller who had relieved Don Filipe of his knife but who kept the big gun still trained on the enraged Mexican.

"Is General Casement here?" Davy asked.

"Not been here," said Haller. "Heard he went west this afternoon."

"That's queer," Brandon said. "I got a note from Mr. Marsh half an hour ago, saying General Casement wanted to see me here at about half past nine about a job."

"Reckon you've been tricked," said the Judge. "Somebody wanted to make sartain you would be here when wanted. But ye needn't worry about that now, boy. You can linger as long as ye please."

"Thanks, but I'd better hunt up the General," said Davy. "I am much obliged to you, Judge, anyway."

As he passed the table where Deroux and Jesson were, Deroux, on his feet, called to him.

"One moment, Mr. Brandon!"

Davy hesitated, then approached the table. Stooping, Deroux hissed at Jesson:

"Now kill him if you have any guts at all!"

Davy came back to the table, cool, contemptuous, determined not to let himself be entangled in a quarrel.

"What do you want with me?" he asked quietly.

"I want you to keep your damned, meddlesome nose out of my affairs," said Deroux. "Do you get that?"

"I have no intention, Mr. Deroux, of inter-

fering in your business," said Davy, rigidly controlling his anger.

He turned away, presenting his back to the pair. Pat Casey, who had worked free from the crowd, edged near, standing with his hand gripping the back of a chair. Jesson, quickly swerving from the table, sprang to his feet. Pat saw him jam the heel of his hand against the butt of his gun, tipping the holster forward toward the back of the young man, slowly withdrawing a few feet from the table. Casey swung the chair like a pick. The gun roared but the bullet went into the floor. Jesson swore as he wrung a bruised hand. Davy, whirling, leaped at Jesson, eyes blazing, with only one thought, to kill the man who had twice tried to murder him. Casey blocked him until Slattery could aid in holding back the infuriated youth. One of Haller's shotgun men commanded the group, preventing Deroux from drawing. The place was in an uproar.

"Hold 'em, boys," shouted Haller. "We'll make this a fair fight. I'll give the word. Now shut up, everybody!"

Ruby Kenny slipped from the room while Davy was stripping off his heavy buckskin shirt. She saw Deroux at Jesson's ear, nerving the man, encouraging him. From the saloon she ran all the way to the railroad yards and hammered at the door of Marsh's car. When Uncle Toby admitted her she pushed past him like a wild thing, screaming for Miriam. When

the girl came out of her room, startled, frightened, Ruby seized her by the shoulder.

"They're fighting at Haller's!" she cried, her bosom rising and falling. "Jesson and Brandon. It must be stopped! You've got to come! Those men won't interfere, damn their souls!"

"It can't be so," cried Miriam. "Mr. Brandon promised me, gave me his word of honor, he wouldn't fight. He wouldn't break his word."

"What do you know about men?" Ruby screamed back. "They care nothing for promises if a promise stands in the way. Any damned one of them will break a promise to a woman. Don't stand there like a fool."

Miriam's heart was like a stone in her breast. She had humbled herself to appeal to Davy. She had thrown herself at him, confessing her love. She had told him how horrible it would be to her, any meeting between him and Jesson. He had pledged his honor, deliberately. And now at a word, a look, perhaps, he had broken his promise, at the first provocation, careless of her faith and love. She ran with Ruby, the dance-hall girl, tugging at her hand. Never again could she give him her trust. He had shown himself weak at the first test.

Breathless when they reached the saloon the girls paused a moment, terrified at the savage chorus of shrieks and howls, the curses, the hammering of booted feet upon the plank floor and the unmistakable thud of heavy blows.

"This way," hissed Ruby. "No use trying to go in by the door. They'd block us."

She led the way down the side street, jerked a knife from her stocking and with a ripping stroke slashed through the canvas of the side-wall. She leaped in dragging Miriam after her. In the center of the swaying, shifting ring, Brandon and Jesson were driving each other, back and forth, their arms flailing, striking like sledge hammers. With her hand to her pounding heart, scarcely able to catch her breath, Miriam saw that Davy's face was smeared with blood from a cut and that one of Jesson's eyes was closed and that his mouth was puffed and dripping red. The thud-thud of heavy blows could be heard over the wild yelling of the crowd as the two fought silently, blind and deaf to all except each other, murder in their eyes. Miriam saw Brandon reel against the wall as Jesson landed a terrific blow against his jaw, then recover and leap forward, his arms flying like pistons.

The girls tried to break through the ring, but men blocked them with heavy shoulders, thrusting them back. Ruby snatched out her knife and pricked a big miner in the ribs. He gave way with a curse, flinching from the menace in her flaming eyes. As they pushed through, Brandon broke inside Jesson's guard and got both hands around the engineer's throat. He took blow after blow in the face, but held on like a bulldog. Miriam, now screaming louder than Ruby, calling to Davy, saw him

tighten his hold until Jesson went black in the face, saw him bend Jesson backward, throw him, fall upon him and grind him down as he tightened the terrible strangling clutch. Miriam darted forward and threw herself upon the floor, her face close to Davy's blazing eyes, eyes from which the light of reason had flown.

"Davy! Davy! Stop it! For God's sake, stop it! It's Miriam."

She saw the mad glare die out of his eyes. He relaxed his grip, then released the bruised throat. Jesson, badly hurt, lay without movement except the quick lift and drop of his chest as he struggled for the breath that had nearly left him forever. Davy got up and stood, looking down at Jesson. The tumult stilled. Nobody moved. Brandon turned to Miriam, despair wiping out the rage that had convulsed his face.

"Miriam! I am sorry. I couldn't help it!"

She gazed at him, saying no word. Ruby, on her knees, was bending over Jesson, kissing him passionately, wiping the blood from his face, crying her love for the world to hear. Miriam turned, aghast. Suddenly the whole scene sickened her—the faithlessness, deceit, dishonor, brutality. Davy, agony in his eyes, stretched out his arms to her. She retreated a step, then turned swiftly and ran from the hall through the canvas which Ruby had slitted with her ready knife.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RED ALLIES OF DEROUX

As the red year of 1867 declined and the road thrust into the heart of the buffalo range, the two greatest and most powerful Indian nations of the northern plains, the Cheyennes and the lordly Sioux, rose in a last effort to halt the march of empire. Red Cloud, war chief of the Sioux, sent his ultimatum:

"We do not want you here. You are scaring away the buffalo."

Porcupine, head chief of the Cheyennes, sent a similar message, more threatening, more insolent. The only answer was the shriek of the iron horse. Then the storm broke. All along the great trails white men fought for their lives against wave after wave of Indian attack. Along the Platte River the military rode or marched from Forts Kearney, McPherson and Sedgwick, and struck heavy blows westward from Fort Russell at Cheyenne, Fort Sanders at Laramie and Fort Douglas at Salt Lake City. Upon the plains the friendly Pawnees roved under their white chief, Major Frank J. North, fighting with reckless bravery against their hereditary foes, the Sioux and the Cheyennes.

The advance of the Union Pacific was an armed march. The surveyors were the scouts. Behind came the sappers, the grade makers, shoveling and leveling and sleeping by night in their "prairie monitors," hovels dug from the earth and roofed with its sod. Then came the forts on wheels, work trains and freight trains, the box cars double-walled and lined with sand bags for extra protection. The men were well supplied with rifles and muskets. Wherever the gangs toiled their Springfields, Spencers, Remingtons or Winchesters were stacked near by. Engineers and firemen kept guns in easy reach. Trainmen worked with revolvers swinging at their belts.

Upon the surveyors fell the first fury of the Indian assault. Then the emboldened war parties struck eastward. Gangs of graders were attacked almost daily, butchered or driven back, to the main body. Track-layers, tie-men and station hands slept under guard, going to work every day with pick or shovel in one hand and rifle in the other. The army helped so far as was possible, but there were now nearly five hundred miles to guard, nearly a thousand miles of reconnaissance. The picket line inside which the road was building with unfaltering progress stretched thin. General Crook kept calling for more troops.

"It's hard to surround three Indians with one soldier," he wired.

But the road never halted. The fighting Irish who were the backbone of the great ad-

vance showed the stuff they were made of, and the order that went out to all workers, "never to run when attacked," suited them down to the ground. End of track was the favorite attacking point of the war parties. Frequently with cunning which defied the best scouting, they struck without warning, sweeping around the cluster of defenders in a swift-revolving ring, showering arrows and bullets.

In August end of track steadily climbing, was at Lodge Pole, reaching into the hills, heading for Davy's pass. Work was pressed furiously, and the gangs were driven hard. Back in Julesburg five hundred men had refused to work, sullen over a shortage of beef and unmoved by Casement's promise that a great herd was on its way, likely to arrive any day. Shorthanded, the gang bosses pressed the loyal men harder than ever and the rails went forward with barely diminished effort, sledges hammering an unceasing refrain of conquest.

Brandon was in the thick of it. Casement had made him a tie boss, with fifty men under him. He ran his crew in sight of his friends Casey and Slattery, and frequently had opportunity to pass the word with these devoted admirers. Pat never tired of telling the story of the fight at Haller's, and Davy had become something of a celebrity among the men at end of track. But the young man was very unhappy. Miriam had refused to see him when he went to the car the day following the fight to explain how circumstances had forced him to

break his word. He was grateful for Marsh's sympathy. Marsh had said that he himself could do little with his daughter, that she was sorely hurt and disappointed.

"Miriam thinks you promised her lightly, meaning all the time to fight Jesson. Davy, she thinks you deliberately put her off with a lie. Her name has been dragged into the trouble by these loose-tongued talkers and she feels bitterly humiliated. Better stay away from her for a while. She'll feel differently later on."

"Oh, I shall stay away," said Davy with a short laugh. "I guess I have done enough to ruin me with Miriam."

His heart was sore. He wanted to tell Miriam, would have told her, that he had determined to keep away from Jesson even if it meant leaving Julesburg and abandoning his hope of working for the railroad; that he had been decoyed to Haller's by a lying message, and that he had been forced to fight for the honor of his manhood. But she had refused to see him. He recalled her face as she stood in the tent after the fight, sadly looking at him. He groaned when he thought of the picture he must have presented—blood streaming from the cut over his eye, shirt half torn from his back, face grimy where the blood hadn't discolored it.

"It was enough to shock any girl," he thought. "I must have looked like a crazy man to her. But damn it all!"

He walked forward to the spikers to see how the rails were going ahead, to get a notion of

how many ties would be needed for the rest of the day. Casey hailed him with delight.

" 'Tis the bye," he called to Schultz. "Sure an' it is the conquerin' hero. 'Tis the Irish in him that carries him to victory, me Tootonic frind. Ye have my backin', Davy, fer champeen of the U. S. and parts west. Niver was a grander left hook displayed be mortal man. There's none can come near ye, Davy, though I misdoubt ye might come to grief in Donegal, though I dinnaw."

"Oh, dry up, Pat," said Davy. "My fighting has brought me nothing but trouble. I wish I had never gone to that place."

"Don't say it, bye. Ye performed a pooblic service when ye bate up that snake in the grass, that Jisson. What's troublin' ye?"

"Enough," said Davy, shortly. "I don't want to talk about it."

"Ye don't have to," said Casey. "It's the gurrl. But I have a word fer your ear, Davy. She'll come around in time. Th' bist av thim are like that. Sure and they're gunpowder and sunshine all mixed. The first Mrs. Casey raysimbled her, though with more of the gunpowder, I do raymimber."

He stopped, springing from Davy's side. Old Schultz was swaying to the ground, his knees giving way under him. An arrow stuck out from the back of his left shoulder. As they knelt over him a second arrow passed over them with a soft hiss. Casey raised a wild yell, electrifying the track workers. His cry was fol-

lowed by a perfect pandemonium of whooping, the savage war cry of the Cheyennes. The railroad men sprang into action, shovels and tamping irons flung to one side as they caught up their rifles. Stringing out along the track in skirmish line, they fired steadily, lying prone or stooping upon one knee, taking advantage of whatever cover they could find.

Off to the left the Cheyennes were swarming, their ponies breasting through the long grass. Young men eager for distinction, had wormed close to the track, silent as snakes, to open the attack with arrows, hoping for a few scalps at the outset. But they were dealing with men trained in warfare, natural fighters, cool headed, deliberate. Declining a direct charge after the first burst of arrows and bullets, the red raiders swerved to form a great ring of running ponies. They kept barely within range as they rode, bending far down against the protecting flanks of the ponies, ripping the air with yells of hatred and defiance.

Davy and Casey, half running, carried Schultz between them to the shelter of a box car, climbing under it and dropping behind the protection of hastily piled crossties. The old man had fainted and while he was unconscious they removed the arrow. The wound was bad but not fatal, Davy thought. Schultz had bled a little from the mouth. A lung had been grazed, likely. They gave him water when he came to and he smiled up at them in his slow, cheerful way.

"Dose fellows dey haf not got der old Schultzy yedt," he said. "Idt iss noddings, dis bin brick."

"Pat," said Davy, intently studying the circling Cheyennes, "there must be five hundred in that ring. We could stand 'em off, but there's very little water left at this time of day. A lot of the boys are sure to get hit and they'll suffer like hell. Can you run an engine?"

"I kin do anythin'!" said Mr. Casey.

"Well, you've got a job," said Davy. "It's up to us. They put the engine crew out of business when they jumped us. Flynn is dead or badly hurt and they've made a pincushion out of that poor fireman."

"Lave us be goin'," said Pat.

Turning Schultz over to Dinny and two or three others that had sought refuge under the box car, Davy and Pat made a dash for the locomotive, running like the wind with arrows slipping past them with soft, sibilant hisses to imbed and quiver in the sides of the cars. Pat went down once, cursing wildly, but Davy dragged him to his feet and they plunged on, reaching the cab and dragging themselves up and into it. Davy leaped to the firebox as Pat tried the steam. He worked desperately, throwing in length after length of the dry wood, and in a minute the steam gauge was climbing.

"Let her have it, Pat!"

"Glory be, we're on our way," yelled the voluntary engineer. They backed from the beleaguered train, picking up speed rapidly as the

fire box reddened and steam fed into the cylinders. Wrong end to, wood tender in front, they backed down the track out of the fight, Casey juggling his steam power like an old hand at the game, Davy cramming the firebox full and hauling fresh wood from the back part of the tender, ready to feed it into the ravenous maw of the furnace.

"Where did you learn that trick, Pat?"

"I'm a man of paarts, Mister Brandon, I'll have ye know," said Casey. "Th' list of my accoomplishments would astound ye, if I were not too modest to recount thim. I learned it in the war, Davy, me bye. In the comp'ny of a dozen brisk lads I stole an injine wanst out from under the noses av the rebels. I'll tell ye the tale, come the day."

Ducking beneath the cab windows they charged through the ring of racing Indians. A bullet or two splintered the side of the cab. A few arrows found lodgment and hung humming like wires for an instant. Then they were out of danger, speeding toward Julesburg forty miles away. Blue smoke trailed a long flat plume behind the lunging locomotive. Pat sent up an exultant yell.

"We're burning the breeze, Davy. Sure and the U. Pay would give me a medal could they know what I am gettin' out of th' ould taypot. She's doin' better than thirty, me bye."

"Drive her," shouted Davy. "Drive her like hell, Pat! I'll keep your fire up."

Less than an hour and a half after they had

broken through the ring of Cheyenne warriors, they thundered into Julesburg, Pat throwing the harsh whistle wide open. The tearing scream of the locomotive startled the town. Men and women poured from saloons and boarding houses. All Julesburg knew what the alarm meant—Indians! The crowd came surging through the streets.

Davy leaped from the locomotive before Pat could stop his new pet, and dashed up the main street toward Union Pacific headquarters two blocks distant. He burst through the door shouting for Marsh. The superintendent ran forward, Miriam at his elbow.

"Marsh," Davy yelled, "the Cheyennes have attacked at the end of track. The men have got to have help. It's a big band."

Marsh paused only a moment to dictate a message to his telegraph operator.

"Get Major North," he said. "Wire him to send his Pawnees. They should be at Lone Tree, only a few miles beyond. They ought to reach the fight in half-an-hour's riding after getting the message. How many are in the war party?"

"Five hundred, I should say, easily," said Davy. "They'll be hard to beat off, Mr. Marsh. We'll need all the men we've got."

"The worst of it is, the military are not here," said Marsh. "A troop of the Second Cavalry is out along the line, somewhere,—God knows where. And there's a few detachments of the Thirty-sixth Infantry which can be

reached by wire. But we will have to depend on our own men."

He seized his hat and made for the door, calling to Davy:

"There's no time to be lost. I'll call for volunteers. You follow. Grab any good men you can find."

He hurried out, Davy at his heels, but Miriam stepped quickly forward.

"Take care of yourself, Davy. You are rash, reckless! That was a brave thing you did, bringing the engine back for help. I wanted to tell you so. But these Indian attacks are dreadful. Don't expose yourself."

"What difference would it make?" he asked, childishly. "How much would you care if I got an arrow through me? Why do you want me to promise you anything? You know I don't keep my promises."

As on the evening he stood with her in the car, when once before he gave way to stubborn resentment, resentment born of the feeling that he had been ill-used, he lashed himself, strangling his well-nigh overmastering desire to throw his arms around her and tell her how dearly he loved her, permitting the devils of stubbornness and anger to throttle his love. She flinched and paled under his harsh words. And then her own spirit flashed. One could go just so far with Miriam Marsh, even in her humbler and softer moods.

"No," she said. "I would scarcely expect you to keep any promise, Davy. You have quite

sufficiently proved that your word—to me, at least—has no value. I am sorry I asked you. You had better go now. Father is waiting, I imagine.''

She turned abruptly to hide the tears that were rising in her eyes, and stiffened her back to conquer the sobs that were ready to shake her. Davy saw nothing of this. His sullen resentment was blind. He turned to the door, flung it open and slammed it to viciously, another gesture of childishness which he himself recognized. Then he ran swiftly down the street toward the growing crowd.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CHEYENNES ATTACK

The locomotive had been coupled to a long string of box and flat cars. Armed men were swarming aboard, and women too. Some of these were wives or sweethearts of the trackmen at bay fifty miles westward. Others, from the dance halls, responded to the thrilling call of excitement, adventure. The women who followed the railroad from one roaring town to another were not of a breed that flinched from danger. To them the rattle of firearms was a familiar sound. Violent death was no novelty. They flocked to the train, delighted at a chance to escape briefly from the monotony of life in the saloons and dance halls. Side by side with the men, they snatched rifles from the cases that were flung aboard, chattering gleefully. It was a picnic to them, a picnic seasoned with danger.

Davy, racing down the street, saw that the long train was filling rapidly. A dozen infantrymen left behind as guards when their detachment marched south the day before, teamsters, clerks, scouts, miners, bartenders, gamblers, a strangely assorted crew of good men and blacklegs, were impatiently waiting for the

train to start westward. Marsh was making a speech from a flatcar, an earnest appeal to the striking workmen who had flocked to the track when the locomotive came shrieking into town, but who had held back sullenly, unmoved by the call for volunteers.

"Boys," Marsh was saying, "your comrades are in danger. We need every man who can handle a gun. Forget your complaints against the road until we save the men out there. Come! Climb aboard! There's a gun for every man!"

There was a jumble of voices in the crowd, derisive laughter, oaths, but no response to the appeal. The men on the train lashed the motionless strikers with their scorn. The women aboard pled with them then to show manhood.

"Don't be yellow dogs," Ruby Kenny screamed. "You'll be ashamed to show your faces if this train pulls out without you."

A man in the front of the crowd threw a brutal, nasty word at her. She lifted a rifle and hurled it. It caught him in the face and blood poured from the gash.

From beyond the town arose the lowing of driven cattle, hungry, thirsty and leg weary. In the excitement of the past few minutes no one had perceived the dust cloud to the southeast. Now the rumble of thousands of hooves upon the dry earth, the growing chorus of the distressed animals and the high-pitched yells of the cowboys rose above the clamor of the crowd.

Wild Bill Hickock, who had ridden from town the day before with a dozen plainsmen to help bring the herd in, galloped his horse through the streets, straight toward the train. He spurred through the mob of strikers, never drawing rein. They fell away, some knocked spinning. With a plunging slide of the hard-checked horse, he pulled up at Marsh's feet.

"They're here, boss," he shouted. "Ten thousand head!"

A big cheer went up from the train. Marsh raised his voice to the strikers:

"Boys, here's the beef herd. We're fixed for months. Come aboard and grab your guns!"

"Let 'em send soldiers," growled Tony Figallo.

Wild Bill leaned from his horse and spoke a word in Marsh's ear.

"Good!" Marsh cried. "They're asking for it. Let 'em have it!"

Hickock wheeled his big horse and charged back through the mob, his six shooter pointing to the clouds. Swerving, as the van of the great herd flowed toward him, he rode off to the side, picked up half a dozen cowboys, shouted orders and fired his gun. Immediately the crash of big revolvers and the wild yells of the cowboys threw the cattle into stampede panic. Hickock leading, the Texans turned the herd leaders toward the mob. The cattle, released from the flanking cowboys, spread to right and left as water overflows the banks of a stream. There

was only one way of escape for the strikers standing squarely in the path of this living torrent. Screaming and cursing as the cattle lunged toward them, they backed desperately toward the train. Clutching, stumbling, scrambling, they climbed aboard, many of them dragged from the ground just in time to escape the first wave of maddened cattle that dashed against the side of the train, long horns swinging like scythes.

Casey, dancing with glorious excitement, grabbed his old enemy, Tony Figallo, as the Italian crouched, pale and panting.

"Ye wanted beef, did ye? Well, ye'll get hell now!"

A long shriek from the locomotive and the train jerked into motion, gathered headway and sped westward. From one end to another there was cheering and singing. Marsh, having made his way forward to ask for all possible speed, retraced his steps. Reaching a flatcar near the end, he stopped as if a bullet had struck him. Miriam, rising from behind a little pile of crossties, thrown aboard to serve as a barricade later on, greeted her father with a smile.

"There's no use to scold, daddy," she warned. "I couldn't stay behind—I couldn't. After you and Davy left me I couldn't stand it."

"Who let you aboard?" cried Marsh angrily.

"One of those nice, polite gamblers," said Miriam, calmly. "I came around from the other side of town, and only a few saw me."

"Well, there's no help for it now," said

Marsh. "But this is a wild, reckless thing for you to do, Miriam. It's not like you."

"I'm not like myself any more, daddy."

Marsh gave her a quick look. He shook his head, perplexed, worried.

"Don't move from my side. When we get to the fight, stay close behind me. We are barricading the sides of the car. Don't expose yourself."

The train was running rapidly, the men throwing up ramparts of crossties and sandbags along the sides of the flatcars. Miriam glimpsed Davy hard at work, directing the preparations for defense upon the car ahead. The excitement of battle illuminated his face. He called out cheerily:

"That's the idea, boys! Make three tiers of ties. Put a short cross piece between each tier, so you can stick your rifles through and see to shoot. Arrows are all we have to fear. They won't do much damage with bullets."

An almost overpowering desire to be near him surged through the girl's mind. She would have left her father to stand at Davy's side. She stood up, her heart in her eyes. Casey saw her and plucked at Davy's sleeve. Brandon turned sidewise. He stared, shocked, unbelieving. He made a step toward her, checked himself and turned his back. Miriam's heart went dead. Her knees gave way beneath her. She sat down upon a tie, forcing back the tears. So that was how much he cared! He could not love her and be so unforgiving, so hard. The child

was terribly sorry for herself. She thought wildly:

"Well, I don't care if an arrow hits me. I don't want to live without Davy!"

Above the rattle and roar of their speed the sound of distant firing reached them, then the ululating whoops of the Indians and the defiant yells of the white men battling from the imperiled train. They swept round a ridge and into the straightaway which led to the great cloud of dust and smoke a mile beyond. Marsh studied the scene through his field glass.

"We're in time, thank God! But the Pawnees aren't there yet."

"I see a cloud of dust off to the west," said Hickock from the next car. "Reckon it's North's Injuns."

From the train rifles began to speak, at hopelessly long range, as the men gave way to the excitement. The train broke through the outer circle of the red cavalry, and into a storm of arrows. They had a momentary glimpse of savage, painted faces bending over the necks of the running ponies that were scurrying away to right and left. A hundred rifles were cracking from the flatcars. Men were yelling in the fierce excitement of the opening battle. Many of the women were firing steadily, lying flat behind the crosstie barricade. Others were making bandages, hard at work, already, in the more feminine occupation of nursing the wounded, for some of the arrows had gone home. Miriam saw one poor chap through whose body a long

A William Fox Production. *The Iron Horse.*

"YOU'VE MADE A SWEET MESS OF THINGS," SAID DEROUX

arrow had fleshed half its length. He was dying in the lap of a dance hall girl. Several others were badly hurt and were struggling to suppress groans as the women worked over them.

The next minute the train was slowing down, coming into touch with the gallant handful that had been standing off the attack under the cool direction of Slattery, the veteran sergeant. They had suffered heavily. Along the track half a dozen bodies sprawled in the grotesque postures of sudden death. Under the cars, behind the low ramparts of ties, there were others who were done with life or who were lying white and grim-faced, fighting the agony of their wounds. In the three hours and a half that had dragged by since Davy and Casey sped away for help, a full half of the defenders had been put out of action, but the others had continued to fight with disciplined courage and they had collected a fearful price for their dead. Out upon the prairie lay Cheyenne braves shot from their speeding ponies, with here and there a dead horse or one screaming like a human being in the pain of its hurts.

One fierce whoop rose above the tumult. The circle around the trains disintegrated, the warriors obeying the command of their chief and swinging westward in a long column, the sun dancing upon the tips of their lances. A quarter of a mile to the west they pulled up their ponies. Two chiefs rode along the front, the brilliant colors of their war finery showing clear.

"Pow-wow," said Wild Bill to Marsh. "It's hard to figger what they'll do now. If there were soldiers with us, I'd say they'd quit. But it's a big band. Porcupine and old Turkey Leg I can make out, but there's another chief who's jist joined 'em. I can't make him out."

From the train all could see that the three chiefs were debating earnestly while five hundred stolid warriors sat their ponies. First Porcupine, then Turkey Leg, spoke with many gestures. Then the third chief made his talk, pointing to the train, to the massed warriors; pleading, commanding, in savage pantomime.

"Looks like Porcupine and Turkey Leg want to quit and this other feller's objectin'," said Wild Bill. "You can see he's tryin' to persuade 'em to renew the attack. Wonder which way the cat will jump."

He had the answer two minutes later. The unknown chief's oratory had won over Turkey Leg. They saw the old fighter nod his head and lift his arm to the braves back of him. He raised a long cry. The band stiffened to action. Porcupine sat his pony for a moment then he too whooped a command. Following Turkey Leg and the orator whose argument had mastered their prudence he turned his pony toward the red ranks. Marsh had had a glimpse of the unknown chief, only a brief flash of his face, but what he saw puzzled him. Then the Indian leader was swallowed up in the restless, surging mass of braves who were holding their ponies with a tight rein.

Suddenly the mass parted to right and left and the three chiefs, Turkey Leg leading, Porcupine and the unknown close behind, all three whooping shrilly and lashing their ponies, burst through the lane. It closed behind them and the whole band swept into motion coming straight at the train.

"Steady, boys," called Marsh, and the command went all along the length of the train as it was picked up by the leaders. "Steady, now. Hold your fire. Have plenty of cartridges handy for reloading. Don't shoot too high. If you miss the Indians get their horses. On foot they're a mark. Now let 'em have it!"

The red wave rolled at them, the ground shaking under the tread of horses, the air hideous with menacing whoops. Fifty yards from the train the wave slackened, halted, broke and rolled back upon itself, as volley after volley roared and spurted from the barricaded cars. Warriors shot through and through rolled under the hooves of the terrified, plunging ponies. Horses with broken legs or streaming with blood limped along the front of the shattered line, neighing shrilly. The whooping commands of the war chiefs rang in intervals of the rifle volleys. Arrows came in clouds, penetrating the chinks in the barricades, dropping straight down as cunning circumvented the protection of the ramparts. Arrows and bullets zipped and crashed against the barriers and the sides of the cars. Half a dozen men were killed and three times as many were wounded in a few

minutes, but the steady, accurate shooting of the defense was too much for the Cheyennes to stand against. The hailstorm of lead shattered their ferocious valor. They drew back, leaving the prairie strewn with their dead, bending down from their ponies, two by two, as they retreated, to snatch up their wounded.

"You've seen a strange thing in Injun fightin'," said Hickock to Marsh as they watched the red wave recede. "In more'n twenty years I never before saw Injuns make a direct attack, a frontal charge. It's clear agin' their natur'. Can't figger out what druv 'em to it."

"It amazed me," said Marsh, with an eye still on his daughter. "It looked to me, Bill, as if they were led into it by that chief you couldn't identify."

"I think you've hit it," said Wild Bill. "Old Turkey Leg and Porcupine never would have tried that move. 'Specially Porcupine, who's an old fox. This other feller managed to work 'em up. Persuaded 'em it would be easy, I reckon without soldiers to battle with. He won't be so popular now, with fifty warriors gone to their happy hunting grounds."

Miriam crouched behind her low wall of crossties, showed a pale face to Marsh's anxious eye. He dared not reveal to her how anxious he was. He patted her shoulder.

"The worst is over," he said reassuringly. "They've had their lesson. We will be out of here on the way home in half an hour."

"I'm all right, daddy," said Miriam, rather

faintly. "Have you seen Davy? Is Davy safe?"

"Not a scratch," said Marsh.

"Are you sure?" asked Miriam. "He's so reckless. Look again, daddy."

"Absolutely, dear," said her father. "I have been watching him, Miriam, from time to time. He has done wonders, Miriam. He has a good head, that boy, along with his fighting qualities."

He was watching Davy at work with the women, over the badly wounded, when he saw a bullet tear the top of the barricade not an inch from Brandon's powder-grimed face. He saw Davy jerk away and crouch as another bullet ripped into the top tie, sending splinters flying. He searched the ground, seeking to locate the hidden marksman. He heard a third report and spotted a puff of smoke which arose from a pile of crossties off to the right, not sixty yards from the car.

"There!" he shouted. "It's a sharpshooter, Davy, close in. We've got to get him!"

Once more the rifle cracked from behind the piled ties. The bullet, narrowly missing the top of Brandon's head, found its target in Ruby, bending over a wounded man. She toppled forward without a sound, falling with outflung arms upon the unconscious figure whose head she had been bandaging.

CHAPTER XXVI

"TWO-FINGERS!"

THE Cheyennes had reformed and were again driving their ponies in a wide circle around the trains, sending their arrows continually in long arcs. A hundred braves, dismounted and strung out, were lying hidden in the tall grass steadily drawing bow or pulling trigger. The braves on the racing ponies were hard to hit and the wide line of warriors keeping up a constant attack from the grass were practically invisible. The men fired at the smoke but it was blind shooting. Marsh saw that more of his men were being put out of action. More than four hundred reds were still to be dealt with. The afternoon was fading. The sun's rays were slanting. Along the whole length of the train wounded men, parched and suffering, were calling for water. He searched the west, praying for the Pawnees, his heart leaping as he saw a nearing dust cloud and an occasional quick flash, the sun heliographing a message of hope from distant rifles. Then he caught his breath.

Davy had leaped from the car and was running along the train, bending low, dodging from side to side, as bullets ripped into the earth or crashed into the cars. He was making straight for the pile of ties where the sharpshooter was

hidden. Marsh cried out. Miriam sprang to his side, following her father's gaze, voiceless in her terror. Marsh forced her down, crushing her with heavy hand to the floor of the car.

"He'll make it!" he shouted. "He's nearly there!"

The enraged yelling of the Cheyennes drew his eyes. He saw the ring break and string out as the chiefs whooped new commands. He looked to the west. The dust cloud was lifting. Through it swept the Pawnee scouts, coming like the wind, veering off to the south as they saw the Cheyennes turn their backs to the train and lash their ponies in a furious race to abandon a luckless field.

"It's all over, boys!" he shouted, and the cry went down the train, two hundred men cheering madly, throwing their hats and their guns in the air, snatching up women and embracing them in wild abandonment to joy.

Marsh leaped from the car, and ran heavily toward the pile of crossties around which Davy had sprung. Events had moved so swiftly that he was not a minute behind Brandon. There had been no more firing from the ties, but as he neared the barricade his ear caught the heavy impact of blows, the panting of men in desperate struggle. He burst around the corner and stood catching his breath, holding his side to ease the sharp pain that stabbed it. Davy, facing him and striking terrible blows at a powerful figure which weaved in and out, lunging with a pickax, cried one word:

"Deroux!"

Marsh, weak, half sick, caught the side of the barricade, steadying himself as the fight whirled before him. The two shifted ground, and he saw the face of Davy's opponent. The evil, swarthy countenance was streaked with red and black pigment in the war symbols of the Cheyennes. It was convulsed with murderous rage, the face of a wild beast. Mustache was gone but there was no mistaking the features that had so often met Marsh's eye, the features of Joe Deroux.

He saw Davy leap to one side barely evading the downward sweep of the pickax, saw Deroux hurl the ugly weapon, saw it flash over Brandon's head and sink a point into the wood, and saw the men flailing at each other with frightful blows, neither retreating, neither avoiding, each insane with determination to get close, to beat the other down, to kill. Clutching for support, fear in his soul, Marsh saw Davy knocked backward by a tremendous smash from Deroux's iron fist, saw the boy reel to his knees dazed, saw him shake his head to clear his dizzy senses, and saw him suddenly leap from a crouch and clasp Deroux's legs with arms of steel. Cursing horribly, his mouth white with slavering foam, blood running from gashed cheeks, Deroux struggled to keep his footing while he hammered Davy's bent head with clenched fists, pounding them like hammers. Keeping his head low, Brandon locked his arms around Deroux's knees, putting forth every

ounce of his strength as he threw himself from side to side fighting to drag down this tree of a man. Deroux swayed, recovered himself, stumbled, caught his balance by a desperate jerk, then plunged forward, headfirst. Like a cat, Davy broke his grip and was upon Deroux's back, his hands seeking the big column of the Frenchman's neck. Deroux rolled over, broke the grip and ripped his finger nails down Davy's face, tearing strips of skin, then clutched for Davy's throat. The agony of a thumb in his eye numbed him, relaxing his arms. Next instant Davy had the neck locked in an unbreakable grip. The threshing man under him struck wildly at his face, sending home savage blows, but Davy took them as if he had been made of stone.

Marsh saw Deroux's face blacken, his eyes bulge. He turned away. He realized that no power on earth could stay Davy's hand. Nor did he want to interfere. Dreadful as the scene was it represented justice. It was plain to him that Deroux had brought the Indians upon them, and the old tale of Deroux's Cheyenne blood came back to him. He heard a shuddering gasp. His straining ear caught the death rattle in Deroux's throat. Then there was silence, except for Davy's panting and the sounds from the train, shouts, far-off whooping, faint echoes of gunfire as the Pawnees drove their ancient enemies.

Marsh turned. Davy had got to his feet and was leaning against the side of the piled-up ties.

His breast was rising and falling as he filled his lungs. His eyes were on the figure which lay between them, the sprawled heap in bedraggled Indian finery, open eyes staring at the sky, lips parted in the beastlike snarl to which he had given his last breath.

From the waist up Brandon was naked and his splendid torso and great arms were spotted red from the bruises of Deroux's pounding fists. Bleeding gashes in the flesh testified to the savagery of Deroux's attack. The man had fought like a beast, tearing with his nails when he could not land with closed fists—anything to rip and rend his enemy. Davy's left eye was closing. His mouth was battered and swollen. But his eyes were exultant as they rested upon the dark, upturned face. He spoke, slowly:

"I killed him, Marsh—killed him with my bare hands, as I had sworn to do. Do you know who he was, this devil?"

Marsh said nothing, questioning with his startled eyes.

"Two Fingers!" said Davy. "The murdering beast who struck my father down! Butchered him with an ax while his Cheyennes held him!"

"God!" Marsh breathed.

"I always felt queer when I was near him," Davy panted. "It was like something warning me, whispering in the back of my mind. Always I had the feeling that somewhere I had seen him before. But I couldn't get it clear. It was too vague. I was only ten when that happened and

I saw his face in the dark, by a flickering fire. He had changed a good deal, too. The mustache made a difference, the way he wore his hair, and the paint."

"I can't believe it," Marsh gasped. He conquered his repugnance and bent over the body, studying the face. He lifted the outflung right hand, the mutilated hand with three missing fingers, that Deroux had managed, rather cleverly, to keep hidden, gloved or thrust into his pocket.

"Oh, it's plain enough, Davy!"

He arose and faced the battered youth.

"You are all right?"

"Yes," said Davy, dully, wearily. "I'm not hurt much, Marsh. But—dad—this beast! It all came back!" There was a sob in his voice. Marsh put an arm around his shoulder, and the boy straightened, with a smile.

"I—I guess I'm all in! I can't go back like this. Can you find me a blanket or a coat?"

Marsh hurried back to the train, a field hospital now, with two-score badly wounded men in the hands of the busy volunteer nurses. Stopping only to give directions to have the dead carried to one of the box cars, he caught up an army overcoat and returned to Davy. Together they walked back to the train and entered into the stir and bustle of preparations for the journey back to Julesburg. The Pawnees were returning from the chase, celebrating their exploit with triumphant whoops, Cheyenne scalps dangling from their belts, or upheld from

saber tips or the muzzles of their rifles. Pawnee braves, dismounted, were roaming the prairie, scalping the dead Cheyennes that lay thick in the grass and brush. The scalp of a dead enemy, slain by another, was a trophy no less precious than a scalp taken in actual combat. Barely amenable to military discipline, savages still, despite their blue uniforms, they were as mercurial as children. It was impossible for Major North to keep them from cutting the seats from their army breeches. In the heat of fighting, they kicked off breeches altogether and fought bare-legged.

Casey met them, silent for once in his life, his face working with grief. They walked to the boxcar at his voiceless invitation. He pointed to a form under one of the blankets, unable to speak. Marsh stooped and lifted a corner of the blanket. The still, white face of Sergeant Slattery stared up at them, his earthly campaigns forever done.

"How did this happen?" asked Marsh.

" 'Twas at the very end of the foight," said Pat, the big tears furrowing the grime of his face. "There was a durty snake in the grass who had been knocked from his harse. He shot the sargint. I caught him in me arms but he could say nawthin' to me. He gave wan look and that was all. I wish they had got me, sor."

There was nothing to be said. They climbed aboard the train, Marsh going to Miriam, Davy avoiding her eyes and making his way to his own car. Some of the women came to him with

water and he bathed his face, removing the grime and blood. Then he busied himself with the wounded, helping to soothe their pain. Women were bending over Ruby Kenny who was barely breathing as her life ebbed from the wound in her breast. The trains, coupled together, got under way and they started back for Julesburg as the sun was setting.

When they reached the town Marsh took his daughter to their car, and insisted that she lie down. He saw that she was white, terribly overwrought. It frightened him. She obeyed listlessly. She had never been so tired in her life. Removing her clothing and slipping on a night dress, she bathed her face and got into bed. When Marsh looked in an hour later, Miriam was asleep.

"A dreadful experience for her," he thought. "I would have given anything to have been able to prevent it. Sleep is the best thing. If she isn't all right in the morning I shall have the doctor in."

He left the room softly, but it would have made no difference if he had trodden noisily or banged the door. The girl's weariness was utter exhaustion of mind and body. Marsh left the car and went to headquarters to work half the night checking up the names of the dead, arranging for their burial and for the notification of their kin in many parts of the country. It had been a sad day for the Union Pacific, one of many black days in the calendar of its unflinching progress across the continent.

Davy had leaped from the train before it came to a stop and had gone straight to his quarters. When Casey followed, desperately seeking surcease from his own bitter grief, he found Davy standing at the window gazing into the night, so preoccupied that he failed to hear the door of the shack open and close. At the sound of Pat's footstep behind him he turned with outstretched hand.

"I know there's nothing I can say, Pat. Sergeant Slattery was a grand man, a good friend to me. Don't take it so hard. Death has to come."

Silence fell between them, a long silence. Then Davy spoke again.

"Pat, I'm going west, to California. The Central Pacific needs men. With my experience here I can get a job as boss. They use Chinamen out there."

"Would ye lave me to go out among thim yelly divils?" said Casey.

"I've got to get away from here, Pat. I'm too unhappy. I've lost the one thing I most wanted. I can't stand it. Out there I can work and maybe forget."

"There's no use arguin' wid ye, I suppose."

"No, Pat, there's no use arguing. I'm going. My mind is made up."

"Then you'll have to take me wid you," said Pat. "You'd amount to nawthin' without me."

"I was hoping you would want to go," said Davy, "but I didn't want to ask you. We'll see what Marsh says."

They went to headquarters and Davy told Marsh of the decision he had made. The superintendent found him inflexible and gave up the attempt to persuade him to stay. At first Marsh declined to release Casey, but when Pat fired up and said he would go anyway, Marsh gave his consent.

"Will you say good-by to Miriam in the morning?" he asked.

"I'd rather not," replied Davy. "You will understand me. If she asks about me, tell her that I have gone away to learn how to keep promises."

There was bitterness in his voice. Marsh frowned. Why was it that youth was so intractable, intolerant, uselessly sensitive? It's perspective was all wrong. There was nothing of vital consequence to keep Miriam and Davy apart, yet here was his daughter looking like the pale ghost of herself, unwilling to mention Davy's name, and here was Davy showing a bitter heart, determined to take himself permanently out of Miriam's sight.

"And they love each other," Marsh reflected. "That's as certain as sunshine. What should I do?"

He decided that anything he might try to do would be apt to make matters worse. Time was needed, time and the separation which would heal bruised hearts. He sat down and wrote a letter to his acquaintance, Charles Crocker, Chief of Construction for the Central Pacific.

"This should make it easy for you and

Casey," he said. "It won't be long until the roads meet, at the rate both are going. Another year should do it. We'll be waiting for you, Davy."

Next morning Brandon and Casey took the stage to Salt Lake City, Schultz and Dinny O'Brien present to wish them luck. Both wanted to go, but Brandon wouldn't have it so. It would be unfair to Marsh, to the road. They waved a last good-by from the cloud of dust rising from the Salt Lake Trail.

As Schultz and Dinny turned back they met Miss Marsh. She had been running to catch the stage before it started, they saw at once. It made Dinny desperately unhappy to see the disappointment, the trouble in her eyes. The girl fought for control, mastering herself as they averted their gaze, gentlemen to the heart of them. She spoke, breathlessly:

"Dinny! Tell me! Is Mr. Brandon on that stage?"

"He is, Miss."

"He left no word, no message for me?"

"No, Miss. He said very little at all."

He thought she was about to fall, but she caught herself. Her impulse was to follow, to cry out to Davy. A sharp sound obtruded itself upon her tortured senses, the thin shrill whistle of the incoming train. She turned toward the station, some vague idea of pursuit impelling her. As she stumbled forward, her eyes centered upon a solitary figure at the edge of the platform. The nearby loungers seemed

A William Fox Production *The Iron Horse.*

THE FINAL HOUR. THE WEDDING OF THE RAILS WHICH WELDED THE NATION.

strangely withdrawn. The man stepped forward. Miriam paused, trembling. It was Jesson who swung himself painfully aboard the still-moving train. Dinny, who had timidly followed with Schultz, stepped forward to steady her.

"I'm all right, thank you, Dinny. Don't wait for me. I—I think I shall take a little walk."

They started ahead. When they looked back, involuntarily, she had turned. They saw her standing, motionless, gazing off into the West. They looked at each other, those rough, simple-natured men. For they knew without seeing her face that her gaze was following the curling dust cloud that veiled the disappearing coach.

CHAPTER XXVII

"MISTA CLOCKEE'S PETS"

Davy and Casey reached California to find the Central Pacific poised grandly on the very summit of the Sierra, with a long tongue of track stretching down over the divide from Summit to Cisco. They inquired for Mr. Crocker and were told that he was somewhere along the Upper Truckee where tracks were building both ways to cover a seven-mile gap. Next day they found him, a massive, black-bearded man, with a great voice, personally supervising the labor of two thousand Chinese strung out along that grade.

"I have a letter from Thomas Marsh," said Brandon.

Mr. Crocker stretched out his hand and took the letter Davy handed him. Davy studied him with immense interest. Marsh had often spoken of this human steam engine who had driven the western end of the transcontinental through or over the most impossible obstacles. The small dry goods merchant had developed into a great organizer, one of the most marvelous drivers of men the country ever knew. Problem after problem, terrific enough to daunt and defeat ordinary men, were seized and solved by Crocker's resolution and ingenuity. When he found that white labor was impossible, that

white men couldn't be depended upon, even at four dollars a day, deserting at the first opportunity to flock to the gold and silver mines, he brought in Mongolians by the thousand, paying them a dollar a day and their keep. The slant-eyed coolies came trooping in from San Francisco, Sacramento and the south, wearing their queer basket hats, blue blouses and flapping pantaloons. They brought with them everything they owned in the world in oil-cloth bundles slung over their backs, indifferent to any hardship, any change of climate so long as they could sell their patient industry.

"Crocker's pets," they were called derisively, and there was truth in the fling. Crocker took them, trained them and used them as a good workman knows how to handle an effective tool. In heat or cold, storm or fair weather, quiet, peaceable, industrious, they carried the road forward. All along the mounting right of way they toiled like ants, innumerable, unflagging. Under the lash of Crocker's tongue they chiseled through the rocky mountain wall, with only black powder and hand tools to aid them. Harnessed with struggling horses and mules they dragged locomotives over the crest and down to the plains of Nevada in order that the road might spurt ahead undelayed by tunnel building. They clustered thickly in the passes, building snowsheds and trestles. With sledge hammer, pick, spade and wheelbarrow they toiled in their thousands. The dash of the Irish carried forward the Union Pacific, but it was

the placid endurance of the Chinese that lifted the Central Pacific over the great Sierra wall and ran it swiftly across the stark deserts of Nevada.

"Mr. Marsh says you are both good men," said Charles Crocker, putting the letter in his pocket. "I need good men. Know anything about bossing Chinamen?"

"No," said Davy, "but I shouldn't think they would need much bossing, except to tell them what to do in following a given plan."

"That's right," nodded Crocker. "They are the best unskilled laborers in the world. Be patient with them, show them just what you want and they'll keep going through hell. They laughed at me when I brought the yellow boys to the line. But they don't laugh any more. There are eleven thousand of them on my payroll now."

Winter was coming fast. Snowstorm succeeded snowstorm. The line was kept open by a procession of snow plows which bucked the great drifts. Track laying became impossible but Crocker and his aids never flagged. Thousands of Chinese were put to work to complete the tunnels at the rear.

"How can you make stone masons out of them?" Brandon asked the boss.

"Why not?" demanded Crocker. "They built the Chinese Wall, didn't they?"

Between storms the army of ants, scattered up and down the divide, launched their incessant attacks with black powder, crowbar, pick

and shovel, blasting snow and ice, as well as rock, from the hard-packed ravines. The Chinese steamed with sweat as they toiled in the bitter cold, but they were invariably cheerful at their hard labor or over their pork and rice. Davy and Casey each had a big gang of willing yellow men under him as they carried on the fight against the crippling winter. At night when they met, ate supper and stretched themselves out after a bitter day, Davy put off sleep to hear Pat's tales of his Celestial crew.

"Sure an' th' monkey faces know their betthers, Davy," Pat began after a day in the snow sheds. "When I first took charge, there was wan av thim—we're good frinds now—says to me, 'What wanchee?' He looked at me so, this cross between a limmon peel and a bad case of yelly janders. 'What wanchee?' I gave him a piece of me mind, Davy, me bye. It is good fer thim lower races to be spoken to by their sooperiors. I says to him, Davy, 'Come closer to me, ye yelly plague and lave me knock the stuffin' out av yez!' "

"Then what happened?" asked Brandon, chuckling.

"Nawthin' at all. It seems I misread the intintions of the pagan. It was arders he was askin' fer. An' arders I gave thim. Old Crocker came along this marnin' as I was bossin' me harrse-haired jools. I knew it was him before he neared me, fer a full half of the Chinks were grinnin' like yelly idols, bobbin' their heads, saying 'Mista Clockee, Mista Clockee.'

'Twas the big boss, a good Irishman, Davy, which is the answer to the succiss av th' road. We passed th' time of day."

Pat cocked an eye at Brandon, halting the ingenuous narrative. Davy knew his man, taking his cue nobly.

"Did he say anything, Pat?"

"Did he say anythin'?" exclaimed Casey. "Me modesty prevints me from raypatin' his exact exprissions, Davy. He gave a glance at me little josses, and he says, 'Mr. Casey, 'tis a great pleasure to find a man of your caliber,' he says. 'We have built this road over the Sierry Nevady, Mr. Casey, at the expense of incredible tile,' he says, 'but the job is a long way from being complate. I want you to know, Mr. Casey,' he says, 'that the Cintril Pacific relies on you for the great race ahead of us,' he says. 'I misdoubt we could carry on without yez.' "

"Pat, you are one of the most talented liars west of the Atlantic Ocean," laughed Brandon. "You said the same thing about Marsh, word for word."

"Av coorse," said Pat, unblushingly. "Me merit niver fails to win the praise which is its just due, Davy. You're jealous, me bye. I can see it in the green eyes av ye."

Winter dragged on, with its heart-breaking delays with Crocker scheming and toiling to free the road from the iron grip of frost. Grading was pushed twenty miles into the plains of Nevada, passing Reno. Crocker received daily

reports of the progress of the Union Pacific, now past the new town of Cheyenne and steadily forging westward toward the Wasatch Range. He was beside himself with impatience as the Union Pacific boasted they would yet meet the Central Pacific at the California line. Their graders were already shoveling side by side with the advanced gangs of the Central Pacific. Two hundred unnecessary miles were to be graded by each road in its vaulting ambition to seize territory from its rival. The spirit of the great race flared high. Trouble between the Union Pacific Irish and the Central Pacific Chinese was of almost daily occurrence where the graders were in contact. The Irish prepared gunpowder mines, exploded them and buried the hated yellow men under tons of earth. But the Chinese, with unlooked-for spirit, prepared a mine of their own with such fatal and disastrous results that the game was abandoned.

Such news drifted back along the line as winter relaxed its grip and early spring spurred the western road to terrific effort. Davy and Casey were transferred from the mountains to the plains in late April, both in charge of trackmen, Davy bossing a hundred tie-men, Casey at his old job of lording it over the spikers. With the engaging adaptability of his race, Pat was now rooting for the Central Pacific to beat the Union Pacific into Ogden, but Davy, while giving his best effort to his new job, cared little which won the race. It was the completion of the task, the union of the rails, the final realiza-

tion of the transcontinental railroad, he yearned for. What mattered which part, eastern or western, gained or lost a few miles of territory if the nation was at last to be spanned by the road of iron?

He found his heart leaping as he thought of the now inevitable day. For many months he had known himself for a stubborn young fool, cherishing childish resentment against Miriam, making her and himself victims of his vain, self-pity. His very soul cried out for her, and more than once he was tempted to throw up his job and hurry eastward to throw himself at her feet and beg for her forgiveness. He damned the foolish pride which had driven him to leave Julesburg without a word from this girl of girls. He made up his mind that never again, as long as he lived, would he surrender to the devils of stubbornness.

From Marsh he had a letter, written from Cheyenne in December, telling of the new capital, of the organization of the Vigilantes and of the taming of the bad men. Marsh had described enthusiastically the wonderful progress of the Union Pacific as it leaped forward in tremendous strides, now six hundred miles west of Omaha, with the pace quickening week by week.

"You are on the losing side, Davy," he wrote. "Too bad you won't be with us on the day of victory."

"I'll be there," said Davy, grimly, but with a light in his eye which had little to do with the

great building race. "I would start to-day but I can't be a quitter. Crocker has been decent to me, trusted me. I must stick it out. But Lord! How the days do drag!"

Toward the end of his letter Marsh mentioned Miriam, only a line or two:

"Miriam is well, I suppose, but she doesn't take the same vivid interest in things. I think she misses you, Davy, but she says little enough to me."

"She might have sent me a word, just a word," Brandon reflected bitterly, then realized the sheer injustice of the thought.

"I am the meanest-minded fool that ever drew breath," he admitted. "Sometimes I think I have never grown up! I refuse to talk to her on the train—I could see she would have spoken if I had acted like a man—and walk out of town without a word, and then expect her to humble herself. Dave Brandon, you have got a lot of sense to learn yet!"

He told Casey about the letter that night, eager to talk about Miriam. Casey's eyes glistened with delight.

"Didn't I tell ye, Davy, that she would be forgivin' ye one of these days?" said Pat. "You're the wurrld an' all to the little gyurrl, Davy."

"I wish I could think so," said Davy, sadly. "I guess I have been an awful idiot, Pat. I seem to have messed things up every chance I got, when I came back from the hills and had the first run in with Jesson, when I fell for that

fake note and butted into Haller's and the fight I had promised not to get into, and again on the train when I was too damned mean to go to her and tell her what was really in my heart."

"I was th' same mesilf, Davy. I raymimber when in the heat of me foolish youth I gave me back to Nora Brady, a back as stiff as a ramrod, avoidin' the pladin' of her eyes. I cannot recall now what 'twas all about. I was very young and high-chinned."

"Did she forgive you?" asked Davy.

"Truthfully spakin', she did not," confessed Mr. Casey. "She burned me haughty spirit wid a few well-chosen wurrds, and the nixt thing I heard she had been united in the holy bonds of matrimony with a black Prodestint from Belfast."

"Pat, I'd kiss the hem of her skirt," said Davy.

" 'Tis not too much," Casey agreed. "She's a foine gyurrl, Davy, pure gold. She loves ye, bye, take it from ould Pat."

Throughout the spring and summer the Central Pacific lunged eastward, Crocker demanding and obtaining unbelievable achievements of toil. As he closed the gaps behind him, completing his tunnels and long snow sheds, assembling his material from steamships which had fought stormy seas for nineteen thousand miles, taxing his locomotives and construction trains with burdens of rails and ties, he made ready for the last desperate spurt, the final leap forward to the prize in northern Utah.

CHAPTER XXVIII

OCCIDENT AGAINST ORIENT

In these final months of stupendous effort, as the great roads drew together, the Nation echoed to their thundering pace. The newspapers East and West printed daily bulletins of the racing rails. Men gambled thousands upon the speed and courage of their favorites as they bet upon the swiftness and endurance of thoroughbred horses. From the halls of Congress and the White House itself to the village stores, the mining camps and the cattle towns the thrilling battle between the Titans, striding toward each other with leveled lances, overrode every other topic, even the presidential victory of a national hero.

The year drew to its close with the Union Pacific doggedly emerging from the Wasatch Range which divides Wyoming and Utah, one thousand miles out of Omaha, victor over cold, thirst, fatigue, Indian ferocity and the ceaseless hostility of Nature itself; with the Central Pacific striding resolutely forward over the last stretches of the rock-ribbed and waterless deserts of Nevada, three hundred and sixty miles west of Sacramento, within easy striking distance of the Utah border and the Great Salt Lake. Three hundred miles separated the furi-

ous giants. Each massed its strength, arraying every resource of power and loyalty and shrewdness for the last terrific leap into space.

Upon the timbered heights of the Wasatch foothills, where the earth resisted like granite and bitter winds cut to the bone, crouched the eastern giant, breathless from frightful toil, searching the western desert for the first sun flash from the metal of its advancing foe. Ten thousand Irishmen, asking only for their red meat, their pay and a boss without fear or favor, braced themselves against the coming assault of a strange, new army drawn from the other side of the world, ten thousand blue-bloused Chinese, the Occident against the Orient.

The advantage was now all with the Central, striding forward over the level snowless desert while Charles Crocker, laughing in his great beard, watched his Mongolians shuffle forward and hurled defiances at Casement and Marsh raging in their winter-locked mountain prison. Cutting loose from his base, the Californian struck northward through the drear and arid land. Like a magician he snatched from the air itself his endless tons of materials and threw them at the feet of his chattering yellow horde. Ever he called for speed.

"A mile a day!" he boomed to Brandon.

To Davy he had taken a strong liking, seeing in the young man the stuff he most admired, loyalty, untiring energy, quick wit, the rare and uncommunicable gift of handling men. Before

the road had leaped clear of the Sierra he made Davy his special aide, working him relentlessly, almost as hard as he drove himself.

"A mile a day. Now is our chance. To hell with the cost!"

With Brandon as his lieutenant, Crocker leaped every morning like a ravening tiger to the new day's challenge. Before sunrise they were breakfasting in their end-of-track headquarters, with its rolling office, dining car and bunk cars; its traveling machine and repair shops. As they ate, the camp of Chinese awoke and prepared for toil. The desert air showed blue with the smoke of their endless fires and the chopping chatter of their unfamiliar speech. Through the camp moved the chief bosses, Irish to a man, rallying the yellow army to the day's supreme effort. At sunrise they were strung out in their thousands straight into the brightening horizon, and far to the west, under rolling clouds of dust, came the caravans, ceaselessly proffering to the insatiable road their burdens of iron and cedar wood.

Exulting in the fierce spirit of the great race, Davy threw himself with every ounce of his virile manhood into the driving toil. Outdoing even his inexhaustible chief, he quickened the pace to two miles a day, then to two and a half, then to three. Crocker threw him no compliments, but Brandon flushed with pride at the sight of the chief's face the night he reported to the headquarters car:

"Five miles and three-quarters, sir!"

Crocker barked to his telegraph operator and sent a taunting message to Casement and Marsh. Back came Casement's retort:

"You and your damned Chinamen can't beat me and my Irish at rail-laying."

Two nights later Crocker handed a yellow slip to Brandon, Casement's gleeful summary of a world-beating performance:

"Six miles this day! Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

That night they sent for the assistant superintendents and head bosses, read the riot act, mixed hard words with promises of golden reward and prepared to extinguish the leaping pride of Jack Casement and his terriers. And the next day seven miles of new and shining rails were bolted down over the desert. Casement came back with seven and a half. Crocker beat it by a few hundred yards.

"Cry 'enough,' you wild mandarin or I'll shame you before the world with a full eight miles," goaded the little general of the Union Pacific.

Crocker pondered, then went over the situation with Davy. They saw that the patient endurance of their Chinese could not hope to cope with the high strung dash and sheer physical power of the Union Pacific Irish in such daily contests. It was a case for guile, for the shrewdest of planning, if the Central was to seize and hold the record. Davy sent for Pat Casey, elevated to chief boss, and prouder of his post than a commanding general.

"He's a cunning devil," Davy had said to Crocker. "Let's see what he thinks of our chances."

The end of the talk was a message from Crocker to Casement:

"The Central promises ten miles in one working day."

Tugging at his red beard, the little general telegraphed to Vice-President Durant in New York. Durant replied, "It can't be done," and to Crocker himself he wired.

"Ten thousand dollars that you can't lay ten miles in one day before witnesses."

"We'll set the day and notify you," Crocker replied.

The weeks flew. There was no time for thought. Toil and sleep, with three square meals, crammed the twenty-four hours of every numbing day. For neither army was there a breathing spell. Hourly bulletins passed between the two headquarters, goads to more desperate effort. The Central Pacific, one hundred miles west of Ogden, found the tongue of the Union Pacific only twenty-five miles east of that desert town and whipping forward like a lash.

As the Central raced on, the Union Pacific entered Ogden like a conqueror, flags waving, brass bands playing, artillery banging salutes. Beaten in its striving to shut the Central out of Utah, it nevertheless struck westward without a pause, working by night and day shifts toward the northwest and up the bold ridge to

Promontory Summit. Treacherous sands and a paralyzing grade slowed progress to a crawl, and out beyond, on the desert, Crocker and Brandon, seeing the approaching giant stumble and falter, grasped the chance that destiny had flung them. Day and night they drove their Chinese, in fierce sun glare and in the yellow illumination of bonfires. Mile after mile, in the last stretch of forty, they held the pace. Then came the night, when, only sixteen miles apart upon Promontory Ridge, they caught the twinkling gleam of the campfires of the Union Pacific crew.

"Now we'll show 'em!" said Crocker. "Tomorrow we'll lay those ten miles. They can't get back at us!"

At sunrise they sprang to action, a vast human machine drilled to the last detail. Union Pacific witnesses came crowding in from Ogden on special trains, Casement, Marsh and their assistants and aides. Leland Stanford, President of the Central, had come out from California to be a spectator. Thousands of uproarious partisans thronged end of track and moved forward in a vast gallery as Crocker's machine gathered headway and thundered eastward.

At exactly seven o'clock, astride a big black horse, Crocker flung up his arm, and the hoarse command "Go!" went echoing back along the line. Instantly the clang and crash of stupendous effort shook the air. Ties had been laid far ahead—it was the rail-laying which counted

—and every possible detail of preparation which human experience and ingenuity could think of had been attended to in advance.

Five long trains, piled high with rails, bolts and spikes, lay upon the main track, unloading from the rearmost forward, dumping the material upon wagons which struggled ahead to shift their burdens to the waiting iron trucks. As these rail trucks slid forward, picked rail carriers, working two by two, seized a rail and slammed it down upon the ties. Adjustment followed, a man to each spike and bolt. Up came the marching columns of Chinese, with picks and shovels, ballasting the road bed, keeping perfect pace with the rail-men. As fast as one iron truck was emptied, the Chinese tipped it off the track, clearing the way for another truckload of rails. Always the long line of supply trains crawled forward, feeding the wagons and the trucks.

Casement, his face a study between vexation over Crocker's guile and admiration for a heroic achievement, held his watch on the rail-layers. He timed the march at one hundred and forty-four feet a minute, a pair of rails downed, spiked and bolted every twelve seconds. Almost as fast as the men could shuffle forward the track moved ahead. The Chinese, dripping with sweat, could not stand the pace and relieved each other in gangs, but the rail squad of eight picked men faltered not one instant.

Over them raged Pat Casey, living the proudest hour of his life, selected by Crocker himself

to direct the job on which success must depend. His gang was Irish almost to a man, six-footers, hardened by years of toil on the road, giants of rare nerve and strength, men who would drop in their tracks before surrendering to the terrible exhaustion of their super-human task. Eight men sent the rails ahead with the unflagging, powerful rhythm of the steel shaft of a steam engine. Shay and Kennedy, and Sullivan and Joyce, and Dailey and Wyatt and Killeen and McNamara, were the names of that unconquerable crew. Trotting at their side, bright eyes watchful to see that every rail came forward in perfect time, that every spike and bolt was in its exact place, ready for the swift-clutching fingers and the poised sledges; ready to spring into the breach if a single giant of the eight stumbled, Casey raised the song of the road, the anthem of its advance.

"Drill, my paddies, drill!
Drill, ye tarriers, drill!
Oh, it's work all day,
No sugar in yer tay—
Workin' on th' Cay Pay Ra-ailway!"

At half-past one, the Union Pacific witnesses were almost ready to admit defeat, for the impossible advance had gone forward without a skip or a break, as fast as the men could walk. While five thousand men were bolting their noon meal, Casement congratulated Crocker, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"You black fox!" he jibed. "You've left me

no ground to fight back on, you and your damned Irish!"

"Wire Durant that I'll be waiting for his ten thousand," said Crocker. "These boys are going to divide it."

At half past two the machine thundered into action again, taking up their terrible toil as fresh, apparently, as in the early morning. At seven, when the sun was dropping behind the horizon, the job was finished, the ten miles and six hundred yards for good measure. A tremendous cheer went up when Casey and his paddies threw down their sledges and stretched their stiffened limbs. Back of them came the blasting shrieks of the locomotives of the triumphant road, a crow which was acknowledged and responded to by the nearest Union Pacific engines, miles to the south.

They held wassail that night in the Central camp, riotously celebrating the achievement and the princely generosity of the exultant Crocker. Davy, conscious of a great let-down in spirit now that the supreme task was ended, went to his chief's car and found Marsh with General Casement and other Union Pacific officers enjoying the hospitality of Governor Stanford and Crocker. Over their champagne, which was flowing in fountains, they were arranging the terms of the truce which was finally cemented by treaty—Ogden to be the junction of traffic; the Central, in return for the disputed mileage, to assume all costs into the city.

"We will complete our track to Promontory

to-morrow," said Crocker, and Casement nodded agreement. "We will join track and drive the last spike next Monday, May 10."

Brandon had a few words with Marsh as the party broke up. Miriam had not accompanied her father but had remained in Ogden. Marsh told Davy that the town was gay with visitors from the East, notables determined to witness the great ceremony of the wedding of the rails.

"Many of our old friends in New York will be present," said Marsh. "Specials are out on the line now. We are holding up the union of tracks until these visitors have time to arrive. Those that are already in Ogden are having a lively time with dinners and dances. It's pleasant for Miriam after her long absence from such things. Some of her old admirers are on hand, Davy, thick as bees around a honey pot." His eyes twinkled.

"Marsh, I have been an awful fool," said Davy. "But I have had my lesson. You can't guess what I have gone through—how hard it has been. I could throw myself at Miriam's feet and kiss the dust from her slippers!"

"Well, Davy, you certainly have my permission to try it," smiled Marsh. "I think both of you were hasty, hot-tempered, unwilling to give way. Young folks are apt to be that way. Will you be coming into Ogden before Monday?"

"No," said Davy. "I'd like to fly there this minute, but it can't be done. Crocker needs me. There's a lot of mopping up to be done before the big day."

Marsh nodded, understandingly.

"By the way," he called, as he left the car, "Miriam had a new proposal yesterday, from young McAllister of New York." He waited, teasingly. Davy bit his lip, his blue eyes flashing.

"She refused him," said Marsh, after a tantalizing pause. "Told me he was too gentle, too easy-going to suit her. Said she liked the bold kind, the reckless kind. Didn't want any tame cats around her."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE GOLDEN HOUR

Clear and crisp the great day dawned, the tenth of May, Eighteen Sixty-nine, the marriage day of the railroads. Flags snapped from a hundred staffs in the one street of Promontory Town, tents and frame shacks colorful and gay. Brass bands marched and counter-marched blaring reveille. The townsmen turned out noisily, with much laughter, emotions pitched high. Promontory, nestling in the shadow of the mountain ridge which towered five thousand feet to the south, felt its exciting celebrity. Upon Promontory the eyes of a Nation were fixed. For news from Promontory a thousand operators waited tensely at the keys of the telegraph.

At the track-ends in the valley the construction crews of both roads made ready for the ceremony, dressed in their best. "Mista Clockee's" pets had responded to the sartorial urge, appearing in freshly laundered blouses, while Casement's Irish swaggered in shirts of crimson flannel and amazing checks of red and green, yellow and blue. Across the gap in the rails, where a short stretch of ties awaited the last two linking lengths of iron, the rival gangs chaffed each other, the Hibernian bosses of the

Chinese taking up the gage for their smiling yellow men, flinging back to their own breed barbed retorts to every rough jest that came hurtling over.

The morning sped, its early hours bringing hundreds out from Ogden in every description of vehicle and upon horseback, its latter end bringing the special trains from west and east, President Stanford's special, with the Chief Justice of California, the Governor of Arizona, some dignitaries of Nevada and the Government commissioners of the road; excursion trains from Sacramento, crammed with hurrahing Californians; Vice-President Durant's special, bearing himself and the courtly Sidney Dillon, Chairman of the Board of the Union Pacific; General Dodge, the Casements, Thomas Marsh and his daughter, and many guests from the East. Over all was the holiday spirit, the flush of success. From Doctor Durant, in his black velvet coat and his brilliant tie to the track-workers in their worn and faded overalls the same thrill of excitement brightened eyes and loosened tongues.

More than fifteen hundred spectators hurrahed lustily as Mr. Stanford of the Central, followed by his officials and guests, left his private train and walked forward to shake hands with Vice-President Durant, of the Union Pacific. The military band from Fort Douglas played "Hail to the Chief," and cheers swept back to the frowning heights of Promontory Summit. Photographers, appearing and dis-

appearing under the black cloths which canopied their cameras, shouted appeals for silence, quiet, commanding the historic moment. More trains arrived from East and West, depositing more bands, more shouting sightseers; Mormon bishops from Salt Lake City, newspaper correspondents, the Gentile Governor of Utah. Flowing from the trains all merged into a cosmopolite throng, dividing to the right and left of the unbridged gap between the roads. As the hour approached the crowd became curiously silent, awed by the realization that millions throughout the land were waiting for the one word which would set a nation cheering. There was scarcely a sound except for the shuffling tread of the Chinese who were preparing the track for the final touch, spanning the gap with one rail, leaving the south side vacant.

Back in the thick of each intent throng the official engines chugged impatiently, the Jupiter-60 of the Central Pacific, marked by its flaring smokestack, and the Rogers-119 of the Union Pacific, with its straight stack and crowning spark-arrester, both brilliant with polished brass work and glistening filagree. Davy, nerve-strung, trembling with impatience, leaned against the Jupiter's cowcatcher, searching the crowd across the gap. Presently his gaze found what it craved, the face of Miriam. His heart beat fast as he feasted his hungry eyes. She had not seen him yet. A young man at her shoulder, a suave and debonair Easterner, in high hat and tightly-buttoned frock coat, was

bending over her, engaging her. Davy prayed for her to look toward him, yet dreaded the instant their eyes would meet. What would she do? He dared not think. But he could not wrest his gaze from her half-averted face, so lovely under the drooping brim of her bonnet. He thrilled at the sweetness and beauty of her, at the slender grace of her. It may have been that his adoring gaze, the silent prayer, caused her, presently, to turn from the exquisite young gentleman from New York, to lift her proud little head and to look straight at him. In that instant his heart stopped beating, then pounded tumultuously as joy that could never be equaled in a lifetime sent his blood surging. For Miriam's eyes were sending to him that message no man could fail to understand, the electric message of forgiving love. Her upturned face was bright with it. A moment, and a small gloved hand fluttered into the air like a winging bird.

"Davy! You belong over here, Davy!"

Tears came to his eyes, priceless tears. He had no shame for them. He would have shown them to the world about. But he could not speak. He could only gaze at her, putting into his gaze the adoration that was carrying him to paradise. With his lips he formed words, inarticulate sounds:

"My dearest! Wait. My duty is here. Until the rails are joined. Wait for me. Miriam, Miriam!"

She understood. In her instant nod there was

the symbol of a lifetime of love and trust. From that moment they two were but vaguely aware of the drama of history which was forming about them. They had eyes for each other only. Sounds of voices, of voices in the ponderous parade of prepared oratory, sounds of cheering, of blows struck by hammer upon metal, more cheering, came to their ears dully for what they heard was the wonderful voices of their own eager hearts.

So they were standing when General Dodge brought about silence and presented a minister from Massachusetts who called down the blessing of Providence upon the roads and their makers. A crosstie of native mahogany, laurel, was placed in position, the last touch of wood. The two rails, the Central's proudly carried by a gang of Chinese in fresh blouses, their pigtails glistening; the Union Pacific's by a squad of its picked Irish, were laid in place. At the right and left, two telegraph operators bent over their keys hurling into the ether the signal to a thousand cities:

"When the last spike is driven we will say 'Done!' Watch for the signals of the blows of the hammer!"

The Massachusetts dominie ended his prayer, and the telegraph sounders took up their feverish clicking:

"Almost ready! Hats off!"

In front of the telegraph and newspaper offices throughout America this signal was repeated. The whole Nation stood intent. Presi-

dent Stanford spoke, dignified, handsome, masterful. Dodge replied. Again the instruments dot-dashed their message to millions:

"We have got done praying. The spike is about to be presented."

Eager hands brought forward the precious spikes, a gold spike from California, a silver spike from Nevada, a spike of alloyed gold, silver and iron from Arizona, spikes of silver and gold from Idaho and Montana, and a silver-headed maul. To this was attached a wire which led to the telegraph circuit. There were more speeches. The crowd shifted impatiently, eager for the climax. Cheers burst forth, then a thunderous wave of shouting.

"All ready now," warned the operators, talking to the whole United States. "The spike will soon be driven. The signal will be three dots for the commencement of the blows."

The spikes of alloy and of silver were set in their holes and driven home by the representatives of the states. Gracefully, Doctor Durant hammered home the golden spike which symbolized the Union Pacific's completion. To President Stanford went the honor of driving the last spike. He approached his task nervously, feeling not only the eyes of the group about him but the fixed gaze of millions. He struck and missed the gleaming head of the spike, hitting only the tie. But the telegraph instruments clicked an excited response.

"Dot-dot-dot!"

To President Grant in the White House and

throughout the nation flashed the magic "Done!" Fire bells clanged in San Francisco and two hundred and twenty guns roared from the forts. Sacramento exploded with uproarious delight. The big guns boomed in Omaha. In New York the bells of Trinity clamored in "Old Hundred," while below in the shafts of sunshine from tinted figures of saints and holy apostles the people chanted the "Te Deum." The Liberty Bell rang in Philadelphia. In Chicago a procession sang its way for four miles along the lake front. The whole country resounded.

While the Jupiter and the One-Nineteen, shrieking their joy of meeting, nosed slowly together to bathe in the champagne which spouted from two shattered magnums, while the bands in determined conflict crashed out "The Star Spangled Banner," while Stanford and Durant stood at the joining of the rails with clasped hands, while the crowd hurrahed mightily and the official photographers raised beseeching pleas, Davy leaped to Miriam's outstretched arms. Her pretty toy of a parasol fell disregarded and was trampled into the dust by hurrying feet. Around his neck went her soft arms, drawing his face to hers. Their lips met and clung, Davy holding her to him fiercely, bruising her soft bosom against his throbbing heart. In that moment disappeared every dark and ugly misunderstanding that had tortured their lives. Without shame, as frankly as the first man and the first woman,

utterly oblivious of the staring eyes around them, they held each other close, mouth to mouth, eyes misty, their souls on the threshold of their dreams.

It was Miriam who drew away, very gently, still clinging to the arm of her man. Her wonderful eyes bathed him with radiant love. Davy spoke, murmurously, words tumbling from his lips.

"My beautiful, my beautiful! My lovely, lovely girl! I can't realize it! I have been such a fool! I was cruel, brutal, beastly! I left you without a word! And you forgive me! Oh, Miriam, tell me, tell me over and over again! You forgive me!"

"Oh, my boy, there's nothing to forgive," she said softly. "I did not understand everything clearly. You frightened me, hurt me. It seemed you took my love cheaply. I was wrong, I know. Pride, Davy, miserable, miserable pride! With both of us. We must watch it. I am not an angel, Davy, my dearest."

"You are a blessed angel," he whispered in her ear, his lips brushing the velvet of it. "A blessed, blessed angel!"

Marsh approached with Doctor Durant and General Dodge. The lovers drew apart, Miriam's face flaming, transfigured with new beauty, the pure joy of her love. They were three wise men, gifted with swift understanding. But had they been much less wise they could not have failed to read the rapture of the young faces before them. Marsh, with his

arm around his daughter, gave Brandon his hand.

"Doctor Durant," he said, "this is the young man of whom I was speaking, David Brandon, a very old friend and about to assume"—he paused, eyes twinkling—"a somewhat closer relationship. Davy, I have the honor of introducing you to the Vice-President of the Union Pacific; General Dodge, you have met."

Durant, bowing in his courtly way, always the personification of polish and poise, gave Davy his hand and studied the young man with a shrewd and appraising eye.

"Both Mr. Marsh and General Dodge have been telling me the story of what you did for the Union Pacific, Mr. Brandon. It was a service which can scarcely be measured in terms of money, in dollars. The pass which your father discovered and which you relocated in such dramatic fashion was the most vital, single problem connected with the building of the road. Your splendid work saved us weeks, months, perhaps, of invaluable time, when the Nation was clamoring for speed.

"I'm not offering you a reward, Mr. Brandon. I am offering you a career. In the years to come, the Union Pacific will need men of your stamp, square men, resolute men, loyal men. I take more pleasure than I can express in inviting you to accept the superintendency of the mountain division. Mr. Marsh assures me that you are well qualified. General Dodge

corroborates that opinion. My friend Crocker, who has just extracted $10,000 from my purse, warns me on pain of physical violence, not to tamper with you. That decides me, Mr. Brandon. If for no other reason than that I owe Crocker one, I mean to have you."

Davy stared breathless. He could not believe his ears. To become superintendent of the great mountain division! His own country! And at this time! His eyes found Miriam's, bright with pride. He tried to make a fitting reply, but the words wouldn't come. He could only take Doctor Durant's cool white hand with an awkward:

"I accept, sir—I am proud—"

"That settles it," said Doctor Durant, swiftly. "I turn you over to Mr. Marsh. He will discuss your duties with you, issue the necessary instructions—all that." With a graceful gesture he dismissed details. "I am glad to know you, Mr. Brandon. We will keep an eye on you in New York."

He bowed, caught Dodge's eye and led the way toward his private car. Miriam's eyes flashed proudly as she caught Davy's hand.

"Oh, it's wonderful!" she cried. "Davy, it's the lifework you have longed for. It was what your father would have wished. It's heavenly. I couldn't bear to marry anybody except a railroad man."

"What's this?" said Marsh. "What's this I hear from my shameless child?"

"Oh, daddy, we do love each other. We have both made mistakes, but that's over, forever and ever."

"Now let me see," said Marsh, with pretended solemnity. "This is the tenth of May. Between now and the first of June there are only twenty days. Any other day than the first of June is quite unthinkable. Yet how can you assemble a bride's trousseau in three weeks?"

"Trousseau?" cried Miriam. "Who wants a trousseau? If Davy will have me I'll marry him in my most tattered old rags."

They dined in Marsh's car that evening, Uncle Toby's black face shining as he waited upon his young missus with special care and pressed "young massa" to eat. By special invitation Mr. Patrick Casey came to the car, with Schultz and young Dinny at his heels. Casey, with the resplendent glory of service for both roads, had been paying supercilious visits to the U. P. camp, escorted like a mandarin by a grinning squad of his own Celestials.

"Sure an' they're out there now, the Oryintil divvles. 'Tis 'Bossee Pattee,' from marnin' till night, 'Bossee Pattee,' grinnin' like yelly apes. But they're grand byes, Miss Miriam. What's this I hear, Davy, about yer becomin' prisidint of the U. Pay? Whatever it is, Mister Brandon, ye'll not lave me behind. Well ye know, ye laughin' divvle, that ye'd amount to nawthin' widout me!"

"You're going, Pat," assured Miriam, and

the Irishman grinned his inimitable impudent grin.

" 'Tis plain to see who's the boss of the new carperation," he said. "Resthrain yourself, Davy. Don't strike me, you brute."

He fled from the car, shouting orders to his escort. Davy and Miriam arose from the table and went to the platform. Lights gleamed from the windows of the private cars, and the sounds of revelry rose and fell. As they stood, his arm around her, her hand in his, the climbing moon was glorifying the night. Softly, serenely, the golden goddess leveled her wand at the glistening pathway which stretched straight before them, the shining pathway to the future, the pathway of love.

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